

# CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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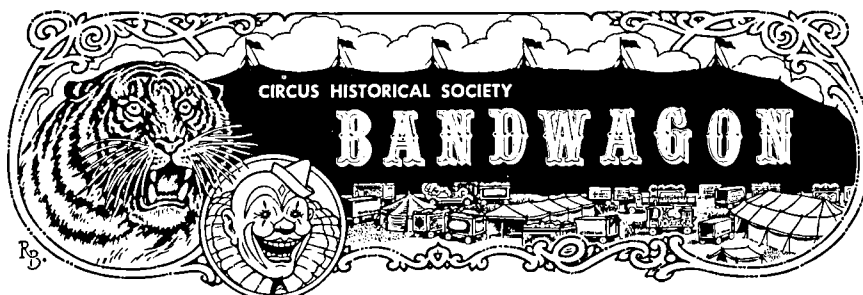


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Vol. 8 No. 1

Jan. Feb. 1964





Vol. 8, No. 1

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Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

Tom Parkinson, Associate Editor

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The art work for our new Bandwagon masthead is used by permission of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus.

## THIS MONTH'S COVER

The Sells Bros. and S. H. Barrett lithograph used on our cover this issue is an example of the colorful work done by the Strobridge Lithograph Co., of Cincinnati, Ohio, in the 1880's. This lithograph is from the P. M. McClintock Collection.

An additional selection of lithographs from the Sells Bros. and Forepaugh-Sells Circus will be found in the center spread of this issue. The posters on the inside are from the Burt Wilson Collection as well as the Pfening and McClintock Collections.

## NEW MEMBERS

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  - No. 1266 James E. Russell  
246 Kenwood Ave.  
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  - No. 1273 William Stringfellow  
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- REINSTATED**
- No. 10 Charlie Campbell  
P.O. Box 301  
Sylva, North Carolina

## 1964 CONVENTION ANNOUNCED

CHS President Bradbury and Bob Parkinson, CHS Vice President, and chairman of the 1964 twenty-fifth anniversary convention of the Circus Historical Society, have announced July 4, 5 and 6 as the dates and Delavan, Wisconsin, as the location.

Convention headquarters will be the Colonial Hotel, and space is being blocked off for our group for these dates.

Delavan is only 55 miles from Milwaukee, and a feature of the meeting will be the Schlitz circus parade on July 4th. Transportation is being planned for the group from Delavan to Milwaukee and back, to ease parking problems. The Ringling Barnum circus will play Milwaukee during the convention, and another large circus may be in Delavan on July 5.

Additional details will be announced in the March-April issue. President Joe Bradbury has appointed Gordon Yadon and Fred D. Pfening, Jr. as members of the convention committee, along with Chairman Parkinson.

Make your plans now for the greatest convention in CHS history, with many outstanding features that will pack and jam more circus into two days than ever before in history. You will not want to miss this one.

## DEPARTED MEMBERS

The following CHS members passed away during the last year: Dean L. Adams, Homer L. DeGolyer, Carl E. Elwell, John W. Garner, H. C. Ingraham, John Kelley, Delvaile H. Theard, Mrs. William West, Frank Whitbeck and William H. Woodcock.

## THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Through this column I will periodically inform the membership of matters of interest to the society, actions of the president and board of directors and other items of concern.

The newly elected officers have assumed office. The first duty of myself and the Board of Directors was to appoint an editor for the Bandwagon. Voting to appoint Fred Pfening as editor were directors Conover, Horsman, Hartman, Daw, Braathen, Aitchison, Draper, Francis, Cripps, and myself. Voting to appoint other candidates as editor were none. (Since there was no duly elected director for Division 10 in the last election that office is vacant.) Since the vote was unanimous I hereby declare Fred Pfening duly appointed editor of the Bandwagon to serve for the next two years. Editor Pfening is authorized to name associate editors of the Bandwagon of his own choosing.

I appointed a committee composed of Vice President Parkinson, chairman, Past President Pfening, and Gordon Yadon to recommend to me a site and date for the 1964 convention. I requested that they begin work immediately, investigating possible sites and dates, and give their report to me in time for a decision to be reached so it could be announced in this issue of the Bandwagon. I felt it was most necessary that the membership be informed as early as possible of the convention so as to make vacation plans, etc. Chairman Parkinson has rendered his report and the committee recommends that the 1964 convention be held at Delavan, Wis. July 3-5, with a trip to nearby Milwaukee for the July 4th circus parade as a part of the agenda. There is a tentative arrangement for a major circus to play Delavan on July 5th. I accept the recommendation of this committee and by virtue of the power vested in me by the constitution and by-laws of the society do hereby declare the 1964 convention to be held as noted above. Other details will appear elsewhere in this and following issues of Bandwagon.

Plans are being made and a much needed directory of the membership will definitely be issued shortly after May 1 this year.

The general status of the society is very healthy at the present time. However, it is necessary that we continually add new members to the rolls. I am establishing an official membership drive to add at least 100 new members a year over the next two years. This is vitally necessary. Although we added a goodly number of new members this past year we also suffered the loss of about two thirds of the number due to failure to pay annual dues, death, and other causes. We have suffered from the unfortunate death of two outstanding members in December, Bill Woodcock, and Homer DeGolyer.

In this issue you will receive an application for membership blank. Please put it to good use. We would like each current member to recruit at least one good qualified new member. There are many fine and well qualified collectors of circuses and circus historians who for one reason or another are not members. Unfortunately, some are not acquainted with us. This business of getting new members is everyone's business and we need the cooperation of all. Please do what you can to help in this membership drive. Keeping our membership at the current level and better still, constantly increasing it, will enable us to put out a large and better

magazine and engage in other projects that may come up.

We hope to keep the Bandwagon at the 24-28 page level and as funds become available to increase it. I like to dream of the day when we can put out a 40 to 50 page issue each time. The membership can be assured that Editor Pfening will continue to give us the outstanding issues as he has in the past. I have instructed all officers to keep their expenses to a minimum in order that funds will be available to enable the Bandwagon to continue it's high quality. For the time being I intend to personally pay my own postage and stationary costs unless they get unreasonably high. The convention committee which will continue to operate on through the conclusion of the 1964 convention has been instructed that the convention must be self sustaining and pay it's own way. Members must be aware of this when called upon to pay the necessary convention registration fee.

One final word, and that is, the membership must realize and be grateful for the large amount of work put in by the secretary, treasurer, and editor, all of which is done without compensation from the society. These outstanding men gladly donate their time and efforts without compensation for the pleasure of serving the society. As the membership grows, naturally their job grows larger. Also the membership is to be congratulated on the high quality of the men elected to the board of directors. All of them responded immediately on voting and other matters when requested by the president. They are in office also to serve the members in their individual divisions. Please contact them on all matters of local concern. Even matters of national concern should be directed first to the member's local director. In this way the board of directors will become closer to their constituents and aware of the pulse and thinking of the members in their division.

Joe Bradbury  
President.

### SUBSCRIPTION COST INCREASE

Because of increased mailing costs and in order to bring the Bandwagon subscription cost closer to the membership dues, the annual rate has been increased from \$3.50 to \$4.50 per year. Single copies will be 75 cents each. Back copies will remain at present prices.

The new rate went into effect with the November-December renewal notices.

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## FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC., 9 JANUARY, 1964

### RECEIPTS

Balance from statement of 10 June, 1963	\$2,128.96
Membership dues	636.00
Bandwagon subscriptions	427.01
Sale of back issues	306.21
Advertising	423.52
Settlement from Robert C. King	3,619.10
Convention surplus	81.85
Anonymous contribution	100.00

Total Receipts \$7,713.65

### EXPENDITURES

Bandwagon printing	\$ 909.65
Bandwagon typesetting	623.60
Bandwagon postage	75.00
Bandwagon addressing (including initial outlay for addressograph plates and cabinets)	113.75

Sub-total, Bandwagon expense (three issues)	1,722.00
Membership certificates	54.00
Membership record books for secretary's file	31.05
Nomination and election expense, ballots and expenses of the Election Commissioner	88.34
Treasurer's expense, all postage including that for mailing back issues	32.00
Secretary's expense, principally postage	48.18
Editor and President's expense	35.00
Payment of loan to Fred Pfening	1,533.15
Bank charges	2.00
Flowers for Homer DeGolyer	7.65

Total Expenditures \$3,553.37  
BALANCE \$4,160.28

## OFFICIAL ROUTE

1963 SEASON

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- \* King Bros. Circus
- \* Sells & Gray Circus

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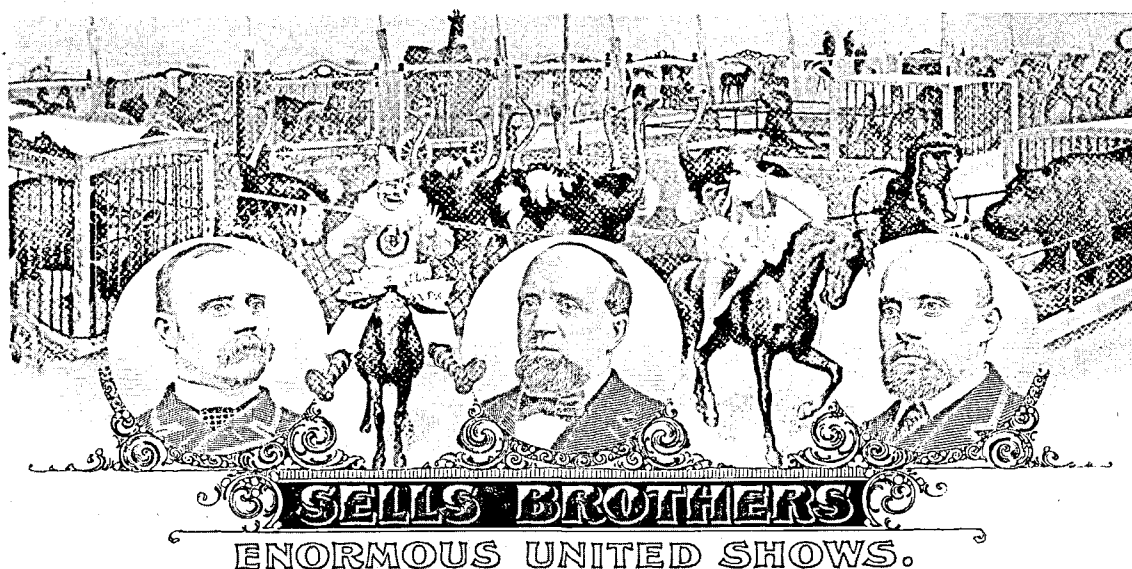
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By FRED D. PFENING, JR.

Ninety-three years ago, in Columbus, Ohio, a circus was organized that became one of the outstanding shows of all times. The circus toured for thirty-five continuous years. During this time it sometimes operated a second unit, all of which brought wealth to the men whose name it carried, the Sells Brothers. The Sells title is one of the oldest in the circus business.

There were six boys in the Sells family. One was killed in the Civil War and another was shot while on duty as a guard at the Ohio State Penitentiary. The four remaining boys were connected with the circus. They were: Ephraim (1834-1898), William Allen (Ad.) (1836-1894), Lewis (1841-1907) and Peter (1845-1904).

The four boys all worked around Columbus early in their lives. Ad worked at gardening with his father, Ephraim married and went to Cleveland where he established a truck garden, Lewis later joined Ephraim in Cleveland. Lewis then accepted a position with James Anderson as a driver and conductor on the street car lines in Cleveland. Anderson was later to be a part of the Sells circus activities.

William Kent, an uncle of the Sells brothers, operated an auction store in Columbus and engaged Lewis to help him. Lewis learned this business quickly and soon interested his brothers, Ephraim and Allen, in starting an auction store on a main street in Columbus. The business prospered initially, but when the excitement of the war was over things quieted down. In order to sell their surplus stock the boys started traveling as auctioneers, sometimes following circuses to profit from the crowds. The

idea of going into the circus business first occurred to Allen, and he urged Lewis to do so.

During the winter of 1867 the brothers were operating a small auction store in Burlington, Iowa, and while there the Sells brothers made their first investment in a circus. This was a brief and unprofitable association with James T. Johnson in a hippodrome or indoor circus. This short exposure brought no profit, but Ad was enthusiastic, and he attempted to convince Lewis that there was a real future in show business. Lewis was not impressed and they continued their auction business. In the winter of 1871 Ad and his friend, George Richards, a cannon ball performer, influenced Lewis into buying some castoff circus equipment that included a few animals. Peter at the time was working as a reporter on the Ohio State Journal in Columbus, but he, too, became a party of the undertaking. Around \$6,500 was invested in this original circus, which to the best of our knowledge was called Sells Bros. This 1871 beginning show consisted of one tent, a few sideshow features and traveled by wagons. The circus prospered to the extent that the boys organized on a larger scale for the following season. They invested about \$35,000, which represented all of their savings as well as all that they could borrow.

The enlarged show opened on April 19, 1872, using the title "The Paul Silverburg Mammoth Quadruple Alliance, Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Circus." The show carried 19 baggage wagons, 13 cages, a tab wagon, 130 horses and a camel. The gross receipts for the opening day were \$1,540, even though it was a wet day. But business did not con-

tinue on that scale, in fact after a few weeks it was necessary for Ephraim to return to Columbus and borrow more money to keep going. But the season was completed. It was felt that the fact that they had no elephant contributed to the lack of real success. An elephant was purchased for the 1873 season.

The 1873 season opened on April 19 and 21, a Saturday and Monday, in Columbus. The advertisement in the Ohio State Journal carried the title Sells Bros. Mammoth Quadruple Alliance, Combined with Paul Silverberg's Monster Menagerie, Museum, Aviary, Roman Hippodrome, Oriental Caravan and Trans Atlantic Circus. This variation of the title was common with the show during the first three years. The different variations would be used in different towns during the same season, as evidenced by newspaper ads. Although no official route is available for the 1873 season, a hand written route kept by Orrin L. Hollis, a bareback rider, shows that the show remained in Ohio and Kentucky for the full tour, closing August 30 in Guthrie, Kentucky. The early closing was due to the fact that the Bank in Columbus contain-

The above letterhead was used in the middle 1890s, during the final seasons under the Sells Title. It is in full color except for the engravings of the Sells brothers. "Sells Brothers" is in yellow with red shading, "Enormous United Shows" is in yellow outlined in blue. This design was reshaped for the 1896 season with Forepaugh's picture in the center top, and with the addition of the Forepaugh title.

After Ephraim's death it was again reshaped, placing Forepaugh in the center between the remaining two Sells, and a horse's head was in the center top circle.



ing their savings had failed. They returned to winterquarters at once. Even though a short season it was successful and with the elephant they had bought in the spring they had a very presentable performance. It is interesting to note from the Hollis book the number of miles the show would jump each day. Each jump averaged 15 miles with the longest being 24, total miles for the season were 1,741.

The Sells brothers became disgusted with the Silverberg title and on April 16, 1874, they opened with a three day stand in Columbus as the "Great European Zoological Association, British Museum and Royal Colosseum, under immediate supervision of the Sells Bros." The "Zoological" title was used with slight variations for the 1875, 1876 and 1877 seasons. During this time the show prospered and was enlarged each season.

In 1878 the Sells brothers purchased a large part of the Montgomery Queen Railroad Circus and Menagerie and this enabled them to make two major moves in the expansion of their operations. First they went to rails, using the Queen equipment, calling the show "Sells Bros. Great European Seven Elephant Show" on 32 cars (the Barnum and the Cooper & Bailey shows each having only six elephants). The second big move that season was the introduction of a second unit, a wagon show, probably using the old Sells equipment, called "Anderson & Co.'s Great World's Circus and Menagerie," under the management of James P. Anderson, who had been with the show as a contracting agent.

The "Seven Elephant Show" moved on 32 cars, including 18 flats, 7 stock cars, 2 elephant cars, 5 coaches and 2 advance cars. The season opened in Columbus on April 20 and 22 and closed at a return stand in Columbus on October 27. Early in the season of 1878 the show suffered a train wreck enroute to London, Kentucky. The train was moving in two sections and the first section telescoped into the second with death resulting for a number of people and many horses. The brothers' duties were divided as follows: Allen Sells was the manager, Lewis was assistant manager and superintendent, with Ephraim as treasurer and superintendent of tickets, and Peter ahead as router and advertiser, and later as railroad contractor.

In 1880 the Anderson show was renamed "The New Pacific Circus and Menagerie." The Welch & Sands title was also used on some dates. Lewis had been placed in charge of the second show and under his management it was very successful. In 1882 the second show was placed on rails and the name changed to "S. H. Barrett's Circus and Menagerie." Barrett, brother-in-law of the Sells brothers, was the general agent. New rail equipment was purchased for the Sells show and the old equipment

was used to put the Barrett show on rails.

Allen (Ad) Sells quit the circus in 1882 and went into the hotel business in Topeka, Kansas. Allen's adopted son, Willie Sells, remained with the show as a rider.

The better equipped Sells Bros. Show, although playing the larger towns, was under Eph's management and did not return near the profits that came from the Barrett show, playing the country towns under Lewis' guidance. Eph was a close treasurer and on the job every minute, but he did not have the all around ability and vision a manager should have. His son, Allan E. Sells, made a good superintendent under him.

In 1884 the Sells show title was

would some years go to the east coast in the Maryland area, but did not venture into the Barnum and Forepaugh territory of New England until later years. They also went further west on occasion playing the coastal area of California in 1891.

The Sells show presented many of the outstanding performing names of the day such as James Robinson and Orrin Hollis. It also carried other features that were somewhat novel for the day.

Anxious to be at the top the Sells show in 1887 featured a "Grand Firemen's Tournament," which pitted the show's fire company against any local comers, in the hook and ladder category, with the winner receiving a "solid silver goblet." It is not known if this trophy every left the show's



The Eagle Tableau is the only wagon that can be identified as part of the equipment acquired from the Montgomery Queen, Circus. Sells purchased the Queen equipment in

Louisville in February, 1878. The wagon remained on the show through the 1907 season, and was then sold to the Frank A. Robbins show. Pfening Collection.

extended to include "Fifty Cage Menagerie and Four-Ring Circus." The enlarged animal display was extensively advertised. Although many of the cages were small and could be loaded cross-wise on the flats the show did have, nevertheless, the advertised number of animal dens. These were paraded open and shown in the menagerie. The 1884 season opened in Columbus on April 16 and closed in New Orleans, Louisiana, on December 8. Total mileage for the season was 11,537. The show continued to advertise the 50 cage menagerie as late as 1895, but it is rather doubtful that actual number of cages was carried any year other than 1884. During the period both the Sells and Barrett shows were on the road, both presented a fine spread of canvas and moved on from 40 to 50 cars. Some reports suggest that both shows in 1885 carried a fifty cage menagerie, but this is most doubtful.

The Sells show over the years had become strongest in the territory from Ohio west to the plains area of Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska. They

ownership, but local judges did conduct the race. A "soul-stirring artillery race, depicting the famous episode at the battle of Shiloh" was also a feature in 1887. The big feature in 1887, however, was the "Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West."

The Sells brothers had watched with interest the attention being given by the public to the wild west exhibitions performed by Buffalo Bill and Col. Carver beginning in 1883. The Sells show decided to add a wild west department to their circus for the season of 1887, and engaged Major Gordon W. Lillie. They met with Lillie in Allen Sells' hotel in Topeka and contracted with him to furnish Indians, cowboys and all equipment necessary for a complete wild west exhibition to be featured in 1887.

Extensive special advertising was prepared in large quantities, and the advertising crews began their publicity campaign for the season's opening. Major Lillie went to the reservation to engage the Indians and transport them to the show, as he had





**SELLS BROS. ON LOT IN THE '80's.** Note the four large tableau dens at the extreme left of the photo. The first wagon moving from left to right is the celebrated Palm Tree Tableau which later was on Christy Bros. in period 1926-30 and Cole Bros. 1935-38 al-

though by that time most of the carvings with exception of the palm tree in the center were gone. The next wagon is the Swan and Fawn tab which was on the Al G. Barnes Circus in the early 20's and was reported to still be intact at Venice, Calif. a few years ago. The

fourth tableau-den from the left with the huge carved eagle in the top center is the one from which the panel carvings were discovered in Baraboo about 1955 and are currently on display at the Circus World Museum. McClintock Collection.

done in previous years for other shows. He had no problem in arranging all details, however he was foiled by a recent Government order preventing the taking of Indians from the reservation for show purposes. Agents of the Government arrested Lillie, and he was detained several days, during which time the Indians he had engaged were signed up for a medicine show. He went to the show and prepared for the season's engagement with cowboys, Mexicans and all the equipment needed for the "Pawnee Bill Wild West" exhibition, but with no Indians. The circus owners were not impressed by his recounting of the Government order, as an excuse for having no Indians, and there was considerable friction over the delay in getting the Wild West performance started on opening day. The other performers made fun of the wild west people and a number of fights resulted. This situation was taken advantage of by the Sells management and fines were assessed against the cowboys and Mexicans and deducted from Major Lillie on salary days. The fines increased until they became a burden and Lillie finally gave his two weeks notice and left the show.

Sells Brothers, in an effort to continue the "Wild West" features after Lillie left, used other people on the show, made up as cowboys, Mexicans and Indians. They had the substitutes doing wild west stunts with considerable shooting with blank cartridges, but it was a poor imitation of Pawnee Bill and his group. This ended in a tragedy which eventually cost the Sells a lot of money, when on the day after Lillie left, some of the

amateur wild west actors put on their performance on July 19 in Clinton, Iowa. Instead of blank cartridges, a mistake was made in loading one of the pistols and real bullets were fired causing serious injury to three people in the audience, one of them being the wife of the County Attorney. In the excitement that followed the circus was hastily torn down, loaded and the train left the state, blowing the next day's stand. The route was resumed in Wisconsin, but for several years Sells Brothers did not include Iowa in their route, and eventually damage claims against the show were settled for around \$50,000. Pawnee Bill started his own show the following year.

The Sells show and the Barrett show represented a large amount of equipment with many animals. If they had been combined all of the equipment would have by far made it the largest show in the country. The Sells brothers, while able showmen, lacked the team work when divided. Lewis Sells, after Ad left, became the dominating directing head. He was a competent director back with the show, but he had remained with the Barrett organization and a strong hand was missing from the Sells number one show. Peter Sells handled advance work and had no liking for being back with the show. The Barrett show continued to get the big money and this finally led to dissension at the close of the 1887 season.

In 1888 the Barrett show was taken off the road and its title was combined with Sells for a single show. The title used by the show from 1888 to 1890 was Sells Bros. Enormous Roman Hippodrome Double Elevated

Stage and 5 Continent Menagerie, United with S. H. Barrett's Monster World's Fair.

A great portion of the property was sold, after the best from both shows had been selected for the new organization. Lewis Sells was made general director of the combined show.

The next few years brought very fine business, and with good management the show prospered and a foreign tour was planned. The show was routed to California in 1891 and closed the regular season in San Francisco. The circus was loaded on a steamer and arrived in Sydney, Australia, on November 12, 1891.

The stock was at once quarantined for a period of sixty days due to an epidemic of glanders. The show attempted after a few weeks to operate with newly purchased stock but it was not successful. By the time the horses were returned to the show much money had been lost and the tour, in general, was not successful. It was the third large American show to play that continent and the tour in no way measured up to the expectations of the management.

The show returned to San Francisco, arriving June 9, 1892. It opened the 1892 American tour in San Francisco showing from June 15 to 26. Moving through California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio (Columbus the winter quarters city was shown on August 24), West Virginia, and Kentucky. The show then went back into Indiana and Illinois. A tour of the south was made in the fall with the season closing in Gadsden, Alabama, on November 15.

When the show returned to Columbus it had traveled a total of 41,145 miles since leaving in the spring of 1891. This included 14,400 miles to Australia and back. The Barrett title was dropped for the Australian tour and the American tour of 1892.

The Sells show never really regained its former success, and did not

This fine billboard announced the show's date in Salisbury, N.C. in 1894. Pfening Collection.





The 1894 big show band is shown here in front of one of the tab wagons, Queen wagon in background. Pfening Collection.

recoop the losses from the foreign tour.

In 1890 the Ringling show had moved into the big league by going on rails, and in the next few years became very strong in the "wheat and corn belt" that had been the Sells' best known territory. After returning from Australia the Sells and Ringling shows declared war on each other for the cream spots in the midwest, but the Sells show was the loser and was forced to invade New England for the 1895 season. The show moved east quickly that year playing Dunkirk, New York, on May 23 and after playing the New England and New York area moved into Canada showing at St. Johns, New Brunswick, on July 22. The show came back into the United States at Niagara Falls on September 8 and headed south for the "cotton belt" tour that closed the season in Cedartown, Georgia, on November 30.

The unsuccessful battles with the Ringlings and the general economic conditions in 1894 and 1895 caused the Sells brothers to look for further help to continue in business.

During the winter of 1895 and 1896 James A. Bailey acquired a one-third interest in the show, in exchange for the use of the Adam Forepaugh title and some financial assistance. The combined show opened in 1896 on fifty cars, all Sells equipment other than the old Forepaugh Cleopatra Barge Float and two former telescoping tableaux originally from the 1871 Howes Great London Circus.

The show moved in three sections in 1896, made up as follows: First section included stock cars numbers 31, 40, 41 and 32; Flats numbers 100, 14, 23, 17, 10, 13, 18 and 16; Sleepers number 3 (Ephraim Sells' private car), 5 bosses), 1 (canvas men); and one box storage and sleeping combined car, making a total of 16 cars. Second section—Stock cars numbers 38, 34, 33, 128, 36, 35, and 30; Flats numbers 102, 25, 15, 21, 22, 37, 24 20 and 19. total 16 cars. The third section was made up with a camel car number 29, elephant cars numbers 39 and 42; flats numbers 11, 12, 106, 103, 108, 104, 107, 105; sleepers numbers 6, 2 and 4; one box car number 27, total cars in third section, 15. The three advertising cars were numbered 1, 2 and 5. All of the flats were 50 feet in length except three 60 footers and one 48 footer. The horse stock cars were mostly 48 feet long with a few 50 and one 60 feet. The elephant and camel cars were 50 footers and the sleepers varied from 48 to 60 feet in length.

The 1896 Sells elephants were Mike

"Starkid" Chambers, elephant boss shown here in middle of outside menagerie. A Columbus, Ohio, street near old quarters site is still called "Chambers Road." Pfening Collection.



and Topsy (Africans), Sid, Queen, Dutch, Babe, Topsy, Rubber, Betts, Romeo, Vic, Dick and John (all Asiatic). Other lead stock on the show included one zebra, one llama, 7 camels and 4 ostriches.

The big top was a 178 foot round top, with three 50 foot middle pieces and one 60 foot middle. This tent required 5 center poles, 23 large quarter poles, 34 short quarter poles and 116 side poles. There were 70 lengths of blues and 17 lengths of reserve seats and 59 lengths of extra red seats.

The menagerie top was a 98 foot round top with five 40 foot middles. It required 6 center poles, 32 quarter poles and 72 side poles. The size of the marquee is unknown, but it had two center poles and six side poles.

The side show top was a 60 foot round top with two 28 foot middles. It had three 28 foot center poles, ten 19 foot quarter poles and thirty-two 12 foot side poles. The 14 banners required fifteen 21 foot poles. Other side show equipment included 14 stages with jacks, carpets and screens, two dressing room screens, band stand with jacks and planks, and three ticket boxes.

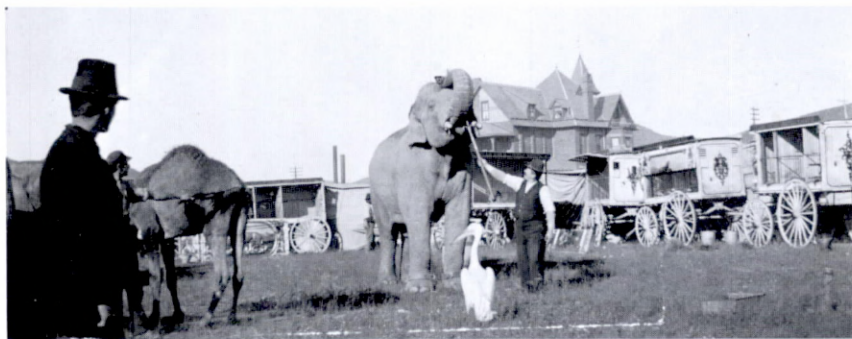
The side show features, under manager Thomas B. McIntyre, were G. A. Shields and wife, giants (\$35 a week); Wesley Baum and wife, tattooed people (\$20); William Parkinson, magician and inside lecturer (\$45); Willie Ray and wife, midgets (\$30); Nettie Leona, snake charmer (\$15); W. H. McFarland and wife, outside opening and knife throwing (\$40), and the Hindoo giants and

wives (\$20 total). In addition one man was paid five dollars a week to have rocks broken on his head and another also received five dollars to be a wild man. A minstrel first part was presented with 10 colored people and a colored band of six. Solomon White was the side show band leader and was paid \$80 a week, including the band. There were four "orators," or ticket sellers, ranging in salary from \$25 to \$12 a week. Total cost for the side show was \$282. No records are available for side show grosses on the 1896 show but in 1887 on the Barrett show on August 9, in Winnipeg, Canada, the gross for one day was \$514.25. The nut on the Barrett kid show was probably equivalent to the Forepaugh-Sells show in 1896 so it is very evident that the side show was a very profitable operation.

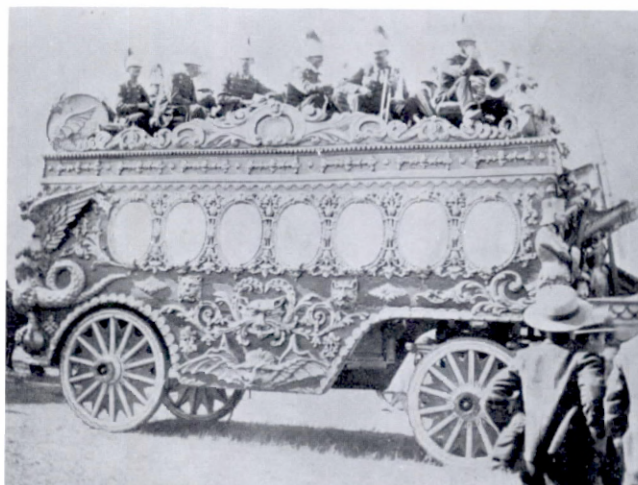
In addition to the canvas mentioned above the show carried seven 5 pole horse tents and two 7 pole horse tents. A total of 245 head of horses were stabled, of which 191 were baggage stock, divided into 2 ten, 2 eight, 12 six and 14 four horse teams.

The performers dining tent size is unknown but was a push pole top requiring seven center poles and fourteen side poles. The working men's dining tent also required seven center poles but sixteen side poles. There were 17 tables in the performers dining tent and 18 in the working men's.

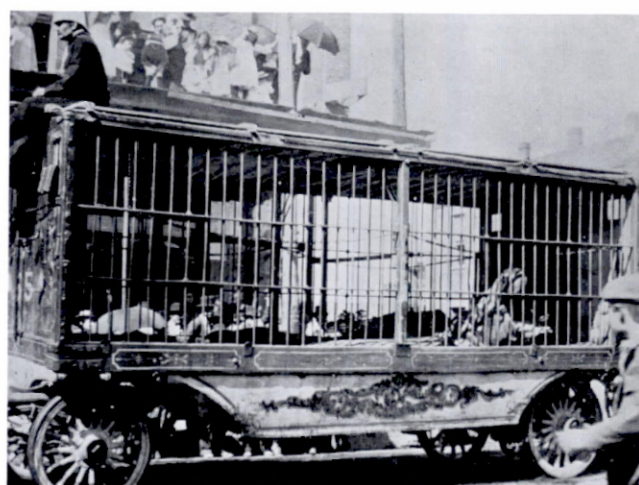
The show carried 332 working men and 64 performers. The total cost for the performers was \$1,979.35. It is interesting to note that the highest







The big band wagon with number one band on top ready for 1899 parade. Herbert Hoyt Collection.



The hippo den in a parade in Joplin, Missouri, August 28, 1899. Herbert Hoyt Collection.

The cages with their contents and length were as follows:

No.	Length	Contents
27	11½ ft.	2 male lions, 1 lioness
35	12¾ ft.	1 male and 1 female puma
		1 male lion and 1 female puma
34	12 ft.	2 male pumas and 1 female puma
37	16½ ft.	2 large Bengal tigers, male
105	14½ ft.	2 male lions
47	16¼ ft.	2 male nyghau
46	15½ ft.	1 male biba antelope
		1 leucoryz antelope male
40	16 ft.	1 female and 1 male zebra
39	16 ft.	1 female elk and 1 male elk
48	16½ ft.	1 Sumatra tiger (sore jaw)
100	Cross cage	1 male fallow deer
29	Cross cage	2 male American deer, 1 spotted deer
45	Cross cage	1 pelican and 1 emu
15	Cross cage	1 Axis deer and 1 Indian antelope
31	Cross cage	7 macaws and 4 cockatoos
25	Cross cage	2 black panthers, male and female
30	Cross cage	2 spotted hyenas, male and female
31	Cross cage	2 leopards, male and female
24	Cross cage	1 male leopard and 1 striped hyena
18	Cross cage	2 pecarries, 1 mandrel and 1 cudge monk
23	Cross cage	3 monkeys
109	Cross cage	1 Axis deer (three legs) and 1 American deer
60	13½ ft.	1 silver tip bear and 1 brown bear
49	15½ ft.	1 rhinoceros and 1 American deer
44	12½ ft.	5 kangaroos and 1 cassowary
43	17½ ft.	1 harte beeste and 1 niger antelope
107	Cross cage	1 tapir and 1 brown bear
52	17¼ ft.	1 silver tail gnu and 1 eland
51	Cross cage	1 polar bear
101	10 ft.	dogs
41	15½ ft.	1 lion and 1 lioness
55	20 ft.	2 hippopotamuses
		& contents
The wagons and contents were as follows:		
9	15 ft.	Cook tent
23	15 ft.	Cook tent
11	17½ ft.	Stable canvas
32	15 ft.	Stable poles, etc.
17	13 ft.	Blacksmith
26	12 ft.	Water wagon
56	13 ft.	Calliope
7	16 ft.	Menagerie canvas
22	14 ft.	Dressing tent
2	16½ ft.	Side show
31	40 ft.	Menagerie poles
48	12 ft.	Chandelier (lights)
15	13½ ft.	Side poles, big top and menagerie
14	14 ft.	Stake and chain
24	14 ft.	Side show
20	17 ft.	Big top canvas
21	17 ft.	Chandelier (lights)
18	13½ ft.	Big top quarter poles
6	29½ ft.	Big top poles
16	52 ft.	Seat planks
8	15 ft.	Trunks
28	13½ ft.	Seat planks
10	14 ft.	Props
1	14 ft.	Reserved seat chairs
3	16½ ft.	Reserved seat chairs
4	15½ ft.	Reserved seat chairs
26	16 ft.	Wardrobe
(Tableaux)		Props
19	26 ft.	Props
24	15 ft.	Seat jacks
13	17 ft.	Blue stringers
5	25 ft.	Extra seats
29	18 ft.	
29	17 ft.	Pick ups
(so numbered)		Reserved seat stringers
30	34½ ft.	Lunch wagon
—	17 ft.	
43	15 ft.	
(Tableaux)		Trapings (Montgomery Queen Wagon)
38	16½ ft.	
(Tableaux)		Candy stands, 3-12 x 18 ft. tops
44	17 ft.	
(Tableaux)		Wardrobe
—	22 ft.	Big band wagon
—	24 ft.	Cleopatra's Barge float
57	18 ft.	Bandwagon, carried plumes, flags, driver's helmets and other parade equipment
50	14 ft.	Ticket wagon
S	9 ft.	Santa Claus float
—	9 ft.	Cinderella float
—	7 ft.	2 Roman Chariots
—	8 ft.	Buggie
—	8 ft.	Buggie
—	12 ft.	Carriage
—	13 ft.	Sea lions





**OFFICIAL PROGRAMME**  
OF THE  
**ADAM FOREPAUGH**  
AND  
**SELLS BROTHERS**  
CONSOLIDATED  
"America's Greatest Shows."

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME  
12 WEST 47TH ST.  
NEW YORK



**SELLS BROTHERS**  
FREE DISTRIBUTION AT EVERY PERFORMANCE

EPHRAIM SELLS, Director. PETER SELLS, General Agent. LEWIS SELLS, Manager.

ST. JOSEPH, MO., JUNE 17th, 1896. PUBLISHED DAILY.

# Official Programme.

SUBJECT TO ALTERATION.

<b>MR. FRANK J. MELVILLE,</b> Equestrian Director. <b>CORNET SOLOS BY</b>	<b>PROF. T. B. LONG,</b> Musical Director. <b>MISS MAUD HAYUARD.</b>
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## DISPLAY No. 1.

Grand Tournament and Triumphant Entree, introducing the Leading Features of the Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Combined Shows.

## DISPLAY No. 2.

Fascinating Living Illustrations of History and Art, executed by Eight Beautifully Formed Young Women, on a Huge Revolving Pedestal.

<b>RING No. 1.</b>	<b>STAGE.</b>	<b>RING No. 2.</b>	<b>RING No. 3.</b>
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## DISPLAY No. 3.

Introduction of Amphibian Wonders, the only pair of Monster HIPPOPOTAMI Male and Female, in captivity, driven loose around the Hippodrome track.

## DISPLAY No. 4.

Clown's Comic Song. MR. CHARLES CARROLL, assisted by the entire Company in chorus.

## DISPLAY No. 5.

Sensational Flights on the Aerial Bars, by MESSRS. GARNELL, LOZELL and RYAN.

## DISPLAY No. 6.

High School Riding. MISS PAULINE LEE.	Educated Ponies Trained and Performed by MR. FRANK J. MELVILLE.	Menage Riding. MR. WM. GORMAN.
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## DISPLAY No. 7.

Acrobatic Achievements. The Millettes { Albert, Henry H., William	Posturing on Silt Skates. MR. & MRS. JACKSON. The Aerial Queen. MISS WALLETT.	Contortion and Head Balancing by The OMY SISTERS. Balancing Ladder. CARLOSSO.	Thrilling Brother Act. The Devans { Thomas, Frank, Harry Balancing on a Running Globe. JEAL SISTERS.
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## DISPLAY No. 8.

The Celebrated Somersault Rider. MR. WM. WALLETT.	Mirth-Makers. LEONARD, RYAN, WEITZEL, ALBION, H. ZORELLA, KENNARD BROS. and CARROLL.	Graceful Carrying Act on Two Horses. MR. HOMER HOBSON and MISS STELLA HOBSON.	Sensational Trick Riding. MR. WM. ORFORD.
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## DISPLAY No. 9.

The Original Adam Forepaugh Troupe of Educated Elephants—Titan Tuskers In a Wonderful Performance under the guidance of MR. JOE BEATTIE.

## DISPLAY No. 10.

Pig Circus trainer. MR. DOPHEY LEONARD.	Burlesque Acrobats. The Brothers KENNARD.	Riding Monkey JIM.	C. B. LONG'S Troupe of Trained Dogs.
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## DISPLAY No. 11.

Feats of Dexterity on a Revolving Trapeze. The Four OMY Sisters. Feats of Equilibrium on a Swinging Trapeze. Mr. BERNARD ORTON	CRADOC, the Original Roman Axe Man in Feats of Juggling.	Trapeze. ALL ENGLISH.
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Extraordinary Physical Evolutions.  
MR. FRANK HILTON.

<b>RING No. 1.</b>	<b>STAGE.</b>	<b>RING No. 2.</b>	<b>RING No. 3.</b>
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## DISPLAY No. 12.

English Bounding Jockey. MR. WM. WALLETT.	Mirth-Makers. LEONARD, RYAN, WEITZEL, ALBION, H. ZORELLA, KENNARD BROS. and CARROLL.	Double Bounding Jockeys. MR. & MISS ORFORD.	American Bounding Jockey. MR. SAM BENNETT.
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## DISPLAY No. 13.

Beautiful, Graceful and Amazing Bicycle Riding by the World Famed STIRK FAMILY—THOMAS, GEORGE, FLORA, NELLIE, GAYNELL and VIOLEA.

## DISPLAY No. 14.

Grace on an Invisible Wire. MISS JEAL.	Double Wire Act. The ARRIGOSI Sisters.	Performances on Suspended Wires. MISS MAMIE KLINE. MISS ORFORD.
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Wire Walking.  
Mr. BERNARD ORTON.  
Tight Rope.  
MONKEY JIM.

## DISPLAY No. 15.

Astounding Exhibition of Human Intelligence displayed by a Troupe of Alaskan Seals and Sea Lions, performed by PROF. JOSEPH WOODWARD.

## DISPLAY No. 16.

Bareback Equestrianism. MISS LINDA JEAL. Ringmaster-Mile Patrice Clown-Mile, Adele.	Funny Fellows. THE BROTHERS KENNARD.	Bareback Trick Riding. MISS PAULINE LEE. Ringmaster-Mile. Tasco. Clown-Mile. Celestine.	Bareback Horsemanship. MISS ORFORD. Ringmaster-Mile. Faustina. Clown-Mile. Diantha.
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## DISPLAY No. 17.

AERIAL FLIGHTS THE ARRIGOSI SISTERS.	THE FLYING METEORS, WEITZEL, ENGLISH, H. ZORELLA and RYAN.
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## DISPLAY No. 18.

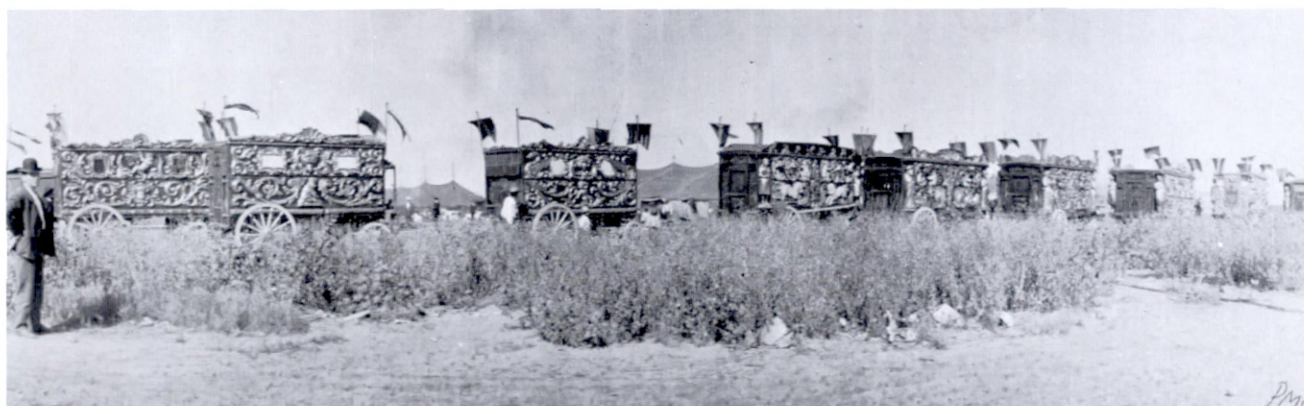
Lightning Hurdle Riding. MR. WILLIAM GORMAN.	Sensational Hurdle Riding. MISS LINDA JEAL.	Hurricane Hurdle Riding. MR. HOMER HOBSON.
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## DISPLAY No. 19.

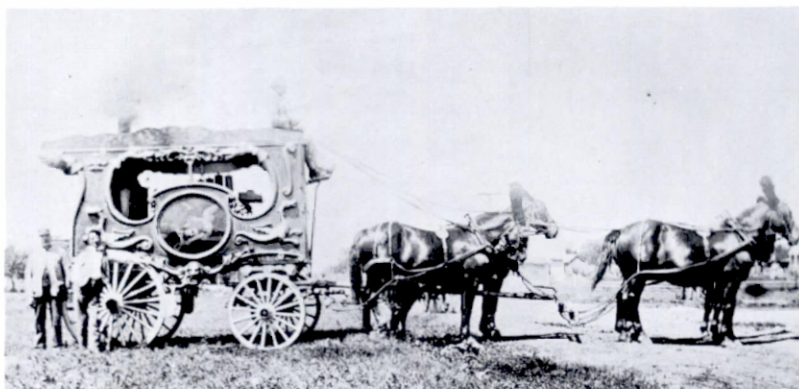
Uncle BERNIE DOOLEY, and a Mule.	Uncle SAM BENNETT, and a Mule.
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# HIPPODROME EVENTS.

BROAD SWORD COMBAT ON HORSEBACK.....	FIRST EVENT. CRAHOC and CARLOSSO
MUSTANG WATLER, Lariat Throwing and Rough Riding.....	SECOND EVENT. Assisted by MISS LILLIAN LOWE
	THIRD EVENT. PONY RACE WITH MONKEY RIDERS.
Ladies' Flat Race.....	FOURTH EVENT. MISS KLINE, HAYWARD, HOBSON and LOWE
Two-Horse Roman Standing Race.....	FIFTH EVENT. MESSRS. WEITZEL, HOBSON and BENNETT
Gentlemen's Jockey Race.....	SIXTH EVENT. MESSRS. WILLIAMS, DODGE, CURTIS and ROGERS
	SEVENTH EVENT. DOGS HITCHED TO CHARIOTS.
Clown's Pony Race.....	EIGHTH EVENT. MESSRS. KENNARD, LEONARD and H. ZORELLA
Four-Horse Roman Chariot Race.....	NINTH EVENT. MISS LIZETTE MCINTYRE and MISS MAMIE KLINE







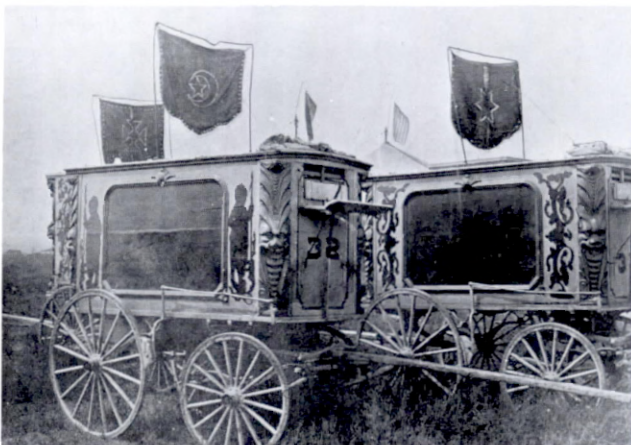
This calliope was on the Sells show in the 1880s and as late as the middle 1890s. McClintock Collection.

paid act was the Stirk Family of 12, receiving \$300 a week. They did a bicycle act, revolving trapeze, double contortion, flying rings and tight wire, in addition to doing the "highland fling" in the concert. The next highest paid act, interestingly enough, was The Woodwards and their trained seals and sea lions at \$140. The Dan Rhyen group of four received \$135 for an aerial act, clowning, Roman standing riding, driving chariot, leaps, tumbling and the old standby "being generally useful." The highest paid individual feature performers were Bud Gorman and his wife, Polly Lee. They were paid \$100 a week.

There were 19 men in the big show band, under leader T. B. Long, who was paid \$30. The musicians averaged \$10 a week for a total of \$217 for the group, plus brother Long. The big show band divided into a first and second band for the parade.

For the 1896 season Shelton H. Barrett was the general agent. The number one advance advertising car, with H. I. Ellis, as manager, carried a press agent, 2 lithographers, 2 programmers (to distribute heralds and couriers) and 14 billposters. The number two car, under F. W. Busey, manager, carried 13 billposters and

The cross cages on the Sells show were all similar to those shown here. There were bars on one side only, closed side show here. McClintock Collection.



one lithographer. The number three car, with E. L. Bannon as manager, carried 9 billposters. The amount of paper used each day during the 1896 season is not known, but a shipping list from The Strobridge Lithographing Co. to Sells for the 1893 season gives an idea of the amount of paper ordered for each day. In 1893 the show used 43 different styles of paper ranging in size from one to sixty-four sheets in size. Thirteen each of 29 different designs of one sheets were used each day. Thirteen of a single style 2 sheet were used. The big daub material daily order consisted of seven 48 sheet "Procession," seven 48 sheet "Menagerie," three 32 sheet "Arabs Performing," three 32 sheet "Arab Pilgrimage," three 12 sheet "Japanese," seven 64 sheet "Circus and Hippodrome," three 9 sheet "Ostriches," seven 12 sheet "Country Bill" and six 12 sheet "Excursion Bill." All of this was used each day. The author has seen one of the 64 sheets, now owned by the Theater Collection of the Ohio State University Library, and it is breath-taking.

The winterquarters of the Sells show in northwest Columbus, Ohio, grew to become one of the largest and finest in the country. Both the Sells and Barrett shows wintered at the site and it was expanded to about 1,000 acres.

The quarters, usually known as "Sellsville" was picturesquely situated on the west bank of the Olentangy River, with the rightaway of the

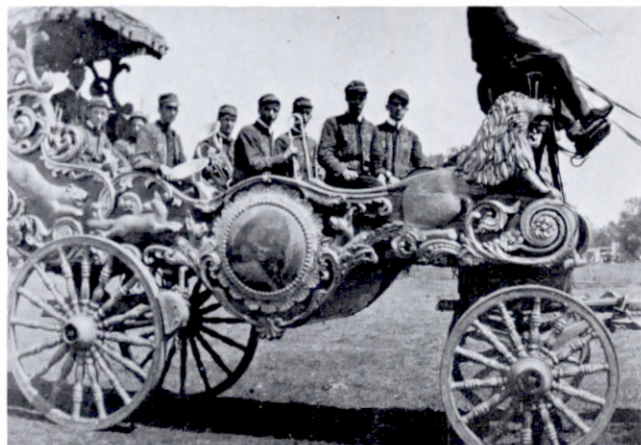


One of the very rare photos of the S. H. Barrett Circus. Bob Parkinson Collection.

Columbus, Hocking Valley and Toledo railroad running through the property. Even in the late 1880's West Fifth Avenue in Columbus was paved and this street marked the south boundary of the quarters. (This location is about two city blocks from the author's office and factory.)

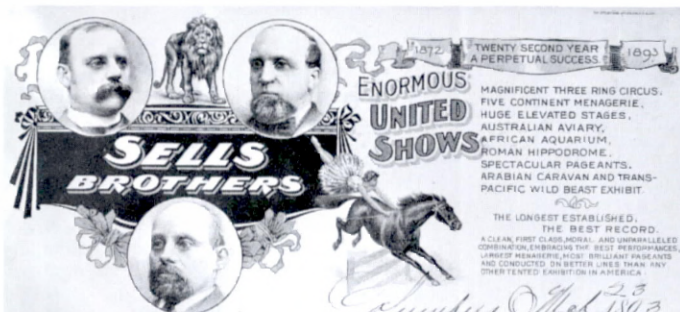
Hay, grain and other fodder was raised during the summer months, and provided all of the food needed for the stock during the winter. A spur off the railroad allowed parking for all of the cars, and a large train shed provided space for rebuilding as well as the usual repairing and repainting of the cars. Another shop provided space for harnessmakers to repair and make new harness. The fancy parade harness as well as work harness was all made by the show. The wagon shop was completely outfitted with a blacksmith department and carpenter area. The wagons were brought from the storage sheds to this building for repair work during the winter. The paint shop was nearby and John Kueffer, a scenic artist from Cincinnati, painted historic scenes and characters on the parade wagons. Mr. Kueffer spent each winter in Columbus decorating the show. The baggage wagons were painted white and lettered in red, with the number painted on the front. Over fifty men lived in

The SELLS BROS. shell bandwagon with band up, ready for parade during the season of 1895. Pfening Collection.

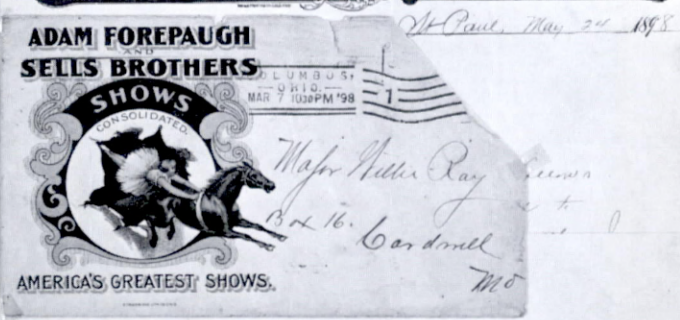
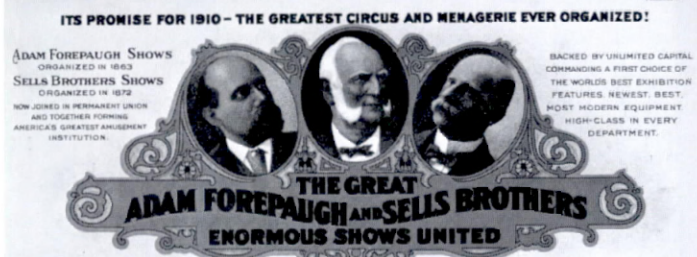




# Chalmer Condon's Letterheads



THE ADAM FOREPAUGH & SELLS BROS.  
ENORMOUS SHOWS COMBINED  
JAMES A. BAILEY AND RINGLING BROS. EQUAL OWNERS  
All Mail should be addressed to the Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Show, Columbus, Ohio.



The top letterhead was used in 1893 and is printed in black only. Forepaugh-Sells 1906 is all black. The "7 Elephant" was used in 1878, it is black only. The "European Zoological" was used in 1875, 76 and 77, black only. The 1905 combined letterhead is type only but is interesting because of the Bailey and Ringling ownership being listed. The revived 1910 show paper is gold with red lettering and full color pictures. The 1898 is all gold with black outlined titled, the pictures are in red. The 1895 Sells envelope is in full color with red title. The 1898 envelope is also full color with red title.





These panoramic photos are part of a group in the McClintock Collection. The train view was taken in 1906 and the other three in 1904.

Sellsville and were fed three meals a day in a dining hall, that was a converted old frame house. The men were called to dinner by the cook striking an old circular saw that served as a gong. The performers came in a few weeks before the opening and stayed at downtown hotels.

One of the most interesting points in the quarters was the ring barn where the riders practiced and the animals were trained. The barn was divided into two sections. One part was used as a stable for the performing stock and the other was the training ring. The ring was outfitted with a "mechanic" and training sessions were scheduled from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. each day. William (Bud) Gorman and his wife, Polly Lee, rehearsed around 1 P.M. each day. The quarters were open to the public on Sundays and the training sessions were presented on that day also.

A large heated building served as the main animal building. Twenty-two permanent dens provided space for the caged animals, and a pond of water was a part of the hippo cage. The show owned a large hippo as well as a baby. The elephants and other lead stock were kept in this building also.

The Forepaugh-Sells show opened for the first time under the new title in Columbus on April 21 and 22, 1896. It played Ohio and West Virginia and after showing Pittsburgh on May 11 and 12 the show headed west showing San Francisco September 3 to 12. The show had managed to avoid opposition from the Ringling show while moving west, but ran into the Wisconsin boys on the way back in Texas. Dallas and Ft. Worth were focal points of the battle with Ringling getting in a week ahead of the Forepaugh-Sells show, and showing to overflow crowds. The two crossed swords in San Antonio, Waco as well as other stands.

The Ringlings had moved into a formidable position in the circus world and were taking a back seat to no one. The Forepaugh-Sells show moved on east and through the south, closing at Charlotte, N.C., on November 21.

The 1897 season opened in Columbus April 14 and 15 and the show moved east quickly showing Newark, New Jersey, May 24. It stayed in the east until the middle of September and then moved fast to Missouri and then into Texas for a late fall tour closing in Texarkana, Texas, on December 3, for one of the longest

seasons in their history.

In October of 1897, James A. Bailey sold one-half of his interest in the show to William W. Cole, probably using the funds for shipping the Barnum & Bailey show to Europe.

The 1898 season opened in Columbus, as usual, with a two-day stand on Monday and Tuesday, April 25 and 26. The show moved quickly through southern Ohio and played Charleston, West Virginia, on April 30. The Ringling show had opened in St. Louis Coliseum, for an April 11 to 20 run indoors, and under canvas in Belleville, Illinois, on April 22. Ringling showed Charleston a day ahead of Forepaugh-Sells on the 29th. The advance billing opposition between the shows was very strong. Ringling's 1898 route book has little to say about business that day, but the Columbus show recorded a big day according to their route book. The feeling between the shows is illustrated by this quotation from the F-S route book. "Had the opposition been a really first class show, the Forepaugh-Sells victory (in Charleston) would have been great. An elephant gains little glory in besting an ant." The show moved back into Ohio and on to Chicago for six days. The Chicago stand was big and compared strongly with their sister show Barnum & Bailey the year before. The show continued through Wisconsin and on to Minnesota and the Dakotas, before moving into its home ground in the Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri area. In Iowa they again ran into the







This unusual photo was taken on June 26, 1905 in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. It shows the full parade doubled up, half in

one direction, half in the other. Note the two bill stands in lower corners. Burt Wilson Collection.



This is the No. 3 Advance Advertising Car of the 1896 Forepaugh Sells Circus. Pfening Collection.

"Ding-Dong" brothers from "Bugaboo," as they were referred to in the F-S route book. Waterloo on the 9th of July had the Forepaugh-Sells show, with Ringling in a week earlier at nearby Cedar Falls. The Ringling show was then routed west and Forepaugh-Sells headed back east.

On July 30 it was announced on the show that Ephraim Sells was in very grave condition and Allen left for Columbus to be with his father. Louis Sells followed the next day and both were at Ephraim's side when he died on August 1. The show closed the season in Danville, Virginia, on November 24.

Following Ephraim's death the ownership of the show was redistributed giving Louis and Peter Sells, W. W. Cole and James A. Bailey each a one-quarter interest.

For the 1899 season the show covered the Barnum & Bailey eastern route attempting to hold it against the Ringlings. The show opened in Madison Square Garden on April 18 and remained until the 29, and then went under canvas in Brooklyn for seven days, starting on May 1. But the going was rough during the 1899 season, and it did not appear that the Forepaugh-Sells name had the luster of its former years. The situation became so bad that late in 1899 serious consideration was given to placing the Barnum & Bailey title on the Forepaugh-Sells equipment. Even though Bailey had the Barnum show in Europe he had retained the American rights to the title. James A. Bailey came to the United States to negotiate, but soon returned to London and left the dealings in the hands of a friend, Albert A. Steward. After a month the deal cooled off, mainly because of Peter Sells, who found himself involved in a sensational divorce suit.

The show opened in New York at the Garden in 1900, 1901 and 1902 and continued over the old Barnum & Bailey route. The 1903 season opened under canvas in St. Louis.

Peter Sells died on October 5, 1904, and this forced the sale of the show

to settle his estate. Bailey had seen the time coming when he would have to take over completely and had asked his former associate and brother-in-law, Joseph T. Maccaddon to return to the fold as manager. Needless to say Bailey was somewhat boxed in, or he would never have resorted to calling upon Maccaddon, after only recently severing a long term association. Maccaddon passed up the offer, one reason being that he had committed himself to take the Sig Sautelle equipment to Europe, as the Maccaddon International Circus. This turned out to be a real flop.

As we look back on history it is quite clear that Bailey had at this time decided that if he couldn't lick the opposition he should join them. But Bailey kept a big front and announced that the show would be sold piecemeal at an auction on January 10, 1905, in Columbus, Ohio. Great publicity was given to the auction and the owners even went so far as to issue a 32-page catalog listing the equipment in detail. Circus owners came from all parts of the country. But as Richard Conover stated in his booklet "The Affairs of James A. Bailey," "the sale proved to be no more than a grand reunion of the big and little circus men who attended with the hopeful expectations of picking up some abrgains."

Bailey immediately offered \$150,000 for the complete show, and that was the end of the sale. That same afternoon he met, as prearranged, with the Ringlings, and sold them half of the show. The show was operated under the joint ownership during the 1905 season. In the spring of 1896 Bailey died and on July 1, 1906, the Ringlings purchased Bailey's half interest from his widow for \$100,000.

After the Ringlings acquired full title to the show they removed the best animals and choice wagons and added them to the Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows. A. G. and Henry Ringling were placed in charge of the Forepaugh-Sells show and they were in Columbus during the winter of 1906 and 1907 getting the

show ready. However A. G. Ringling died during the 1907 season and the show was taken to Baraboo after closing on November 16, 1907, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. The Ringlings did not tour the show in 1908 or 1909. The Wisconsin brothers had purchased the Barnum & Bailey show in 1907 and concentrated their attention in that area until 1910 when they revived the Forepaugh-Sells title for a smaller edition. The show was toured again in 1911 for the final time.

It was not until 1935 that the name was again used for the final time in connection with the Hagenbeck-Wallace show.

Lewis Sells, by far the best executive of the four brothers, and counted as one of the shrewdest and most resourceful men in the circus world, died on September 5, 1907.

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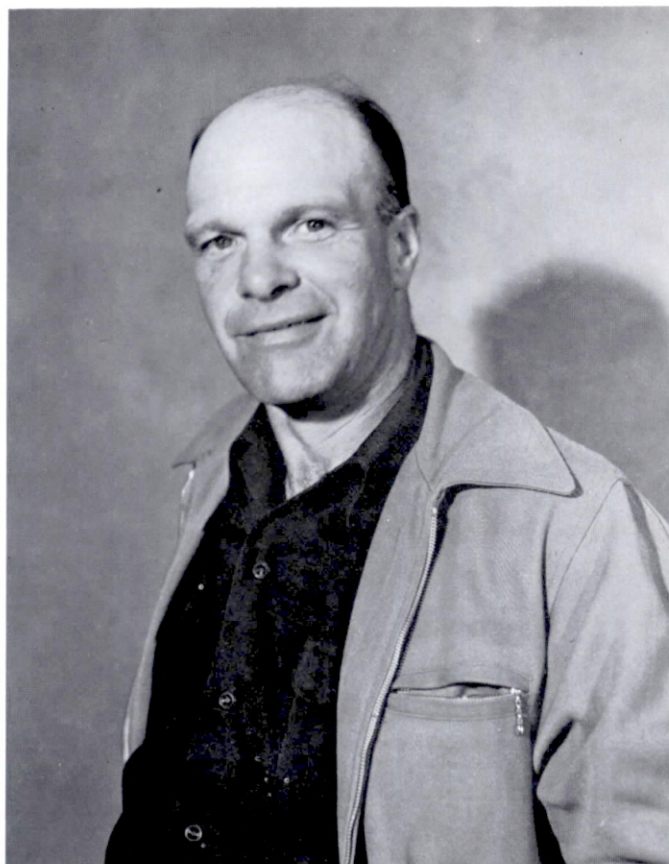
# SELLS BROTHERS' ENORMOUS UNITED SHOWS





# The King of Circus Historians

By TOM PARKINSON



When the full history of American circuses is written, the author, whether he knows it or not, will owe an important part of his success to William H. Woodcock.

Woodcock is the foremost authority on show history, a walking encyclopedia of titles, dates, details and anecdotes. Whether his elephants ever forget may be argued by authorities, but Woodcock rarely misses.

Ask him about the Cole title and he'll reel off the story from William W. to James W. Show him the photograph of an old bandwagon and he'll state its full history—wagon works to wreck or bonfire. Show enough interest in elephant lore and Woodcock will trace the history of the herds from show to show.

Whether the questions come in Woodcock's voluminous correspondence or during a free moment on the lot makes no difference. The odds are that Bill has the answer ready. Invariably his reply is accurate to the last detail.

## In Answer Man Role

Other circus historians file his data-crammed letters and quote his comments as edicts from the final authority. When visitors come on the show to talk with him, Woodcock brings out treasuries of old pictures, routes, programs and what have you. He's the "answer man" when scores of acquaintances pose puzzlers about any and all circuses from John Bill Ricketts to John Ringling North.

Putting him in this position is a combination of love for circuses and parade wagons, a photographic mind trained on good literature and a mass of first-hand experience with many of the shows that have made history.

Woodcock's trouping started even before he joined a circus because his father, a merchant, moved frequently. His father was the son of an English doctor and was brought to Raleigh, N.C., as a child. The family later moved to Hot Springs, Ark., where Bill's father met and married a girl from Mississippi. The couple moved to Portales, N.M., where Bill was born May 19, 1904. His father's general store handled groceries, wagons and other supplies for the ranchers in that still-wild country. Cowboys who came to town were as eager for candy as they were for whiskey, and the senior Woodcock sold both. On Sundays the bar was covered with a sheet and church services were conducted in the store.

## Sees Early-Day Shows

As a child, Bill was taken to all the circuses that came along, and he recalls his life not by years but by show dates. He remembers seeing Campbell Bros. at Portales, probably in 1908. Norris & Rowe came in and Bill remembers the big male elephant he later came to know as Hero.

The Woodcocks moved to Aransas Pass, Tex., where Bill saw a two-car show. He never has been able to identify that one, but its cars were blue and the high diver in the free act had only one arm and one leg. Next, he saw the Great Sanger Shows at Batesville, Miss., in 1912, so the family's move to nearby Courtland, Miss., was shortly before that. Bill points out that this show was the 10-car trick Mugivan and Bowers purchased from Dode Fiske and that Zack Terrell and Louis Thilman were in charge.

The Woodcock collection of cir-

cusiana, now one of the most significant, was started early. Bill still has heralds from those Campbell and Sanger dates as well as a Sun Bros. appearance in Mississippi at about the same time.

## Remembers Much Detail

Early in 1913, Bill saw Hagenbeck-Wallace, Barnum & Bailey, Gentry Bros. and Sells-Floto in Memphis, next stop on the family route card. Later that season, he caught the Buffalo Bill-Pawnee Bill show on its swan-song tour, and he recalls that auto polo was a big feature in the program.

A second stay in Courtland, Miss., brought no shows Bill's way, but in 1916 the family moved back to Hot Springs. The Woodcocks arrived on a Saturday, Al G. Barnes Circus came in on the following Saturday and Gentry Bros. made it the next Tuesday. Bill declares Gentry was the greatest of dog and pony shows, and he recalls minute details of the show's 1916 parade, which included a cage of house cats.

The biggest edition of John Robinson's 10 Big Shows, that of 1917, is vivid in Bill's memory for its 45 cars, 15 elephants, 8-camel hitch, baby hippo and 6-pole top. Less than a month later he saw the Jess Willard-Buffalo Bill show, successor to the first 101 Ranch horse opera. And when Sells-Floto came in that season, Bill counted the 43 cars back on the show. He remembers that it was short

Mrs. Woodcock kindly loaned this photo. It was taken by Harry Atwell in 1951. On the back Bill had written under his name "Student of Circus History, Elephantology and Side Show Oratory."



of help because of the war and didn't equal the Robinson outfit.

He saw Robinson again and made his first visit to Ringling Bros.' Circus at Nashville in 1918, so that was the time he was a plumber's helper in a duPont war plant. Back in Hot Springs, the Howes Great London Show, operated by Chester Monohan and Herb Duval, laid off because of the influenza epidemic, and Bill remembers that the people lived on oranges from a nearby grove.

Hagenbeck, Yankee Robinson and the newly combined Ringling-Barnum aggregations were those Bill saw in 1919, with the Ringling parade of 18 cages and 20 other wagons making a deep impression.

#### Studies Literature, History

Between circus dates, Bill attended schools in the various towns. But of more interest to him were the books his parents had. Bill pored over the works of Walter Scott, read *Ben Hur* and Homer found Dickens' stuff too deep and developed a special interest in ancient history. All this heavy reading weakened his eyes so that he must hold a photo closely to determine whether it was taken on Howes Great London in 1921 or Gollmar Bros. in 1922.

Now Bill can recite both Greek and Roman versions of the mythology depicted in wood-carvings on old parade vehicles. When talk turns to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shows, Bill would rather discuss the circus-type wagons that the Stetson, Terry and Phillips outfits had, but he also can point out how the text of the original book was changed in later editions and in stage versions. If necessary, he can quote at length from Shakespeare as readily as from *The Billboard* of 1906.

#### Starts With Rhoda Royal

Bill's professional circus career began when he ran away from a school at Bellbuckle, Tenn., to join Rhoda Royal Circus in April, 1920. He left that one to join Ringling-Barnum at Altoona, Pa., as a camel punk, and in August he moved over to Al G. Barnes at Clinton, Ill. On the Barnes show, Bill went to work

for Cheerful Gardner in the elephant department. In his opinion, Gardner is the greatest of old-time bull men while Mac McDonald is high on the list of current trainers.

Bill opened 1921 as a billposter ahead of Campbell, Bailey & Hutchinson Circus and later moved back to the show to work for Al Langdon, who had two of William P. Hall's bulls on the show. All of 1922 was spent with Bert Noyes' elephant crew on Hagenbeck-Wallace.

Cheerful Gardner was Bill's boss again in 1923, when they worked the 12 elephants on the John Robinson Circus. Danny Odom was manager, Sam D. Dill was assistant manager, and Clyde Beatty, assistant to Pete Taylor in the animal department, was working four polar bears, Bill recalls. Later that season he was a billposter for the Cooper Bros. two-car show, one of the Elmer Jones extravaganzas.

#### Trombonist, Canvas Boss

Marcel & Douglas Circus opened out of Hot Springs in 1924 and Bill went along to play a poor trombone in the band and boss the canvas crew. When that folded, he walked 22 miles to join Golden Bros. at Prescott, Ark., and in June he threw in with Atterbury Bros.' wagon show.

Atterbury had what Bill says was just a plain dumb elephant named Diamond. During the performance, Bill worked Diamond and gave a lecture about elephants. For the lecture, he expanded the bull's name to Black Diamond. It later went bad on the Barnes show and had to be executed.

After staying out all winter with Atterbury, Bill joined Lee Bros.' Circus at Port Arthur, Texas, but stayed only one day as pit show manager before returning home in the spring of 1925.

#### Works Hall Elephants

Soon he was off for Lancaster, Mo., home base for the elephant and circus trading operations of William P. Hall. Woodcock declares that Diamond Billy Hall was the most remarkable man he ever knew. Illiterate, Hall said the only day he ever wasted was the one he spent in school, but he was a genius at mathematics and "a regular gypsy horse trader." Three huge diamond stick pins frayed Hall's ex-

pensive ties. Woodcock likens his personality to that of Poge O'Brien, circus character of the 1870's.

For Hall, Woodcock worked elephant acts in parks, fairs, vaudeville and the first circus given in the Chicago Stadium. Miller Bros.' 101 Ranch played that date and nine Hall bulls were added to the five from 101. In 1926, Hall assigned Woodcock to Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros.' Circus, where C. H. (High Pockets) Baudendistel was in charge of the Hall-owned elephant herd.

Still with the Hall enterprises, Bill had three bulls on the historic Orton Bros.' wagon show in 1927. It was there that he met Babe Orton, then and now a versatile performer. They were married in 1932. Their son, Buckles, now completes the team.

#### Moves to Sells Floto

Bill left the Hall farm late in 1929 and was with Sells Floto, working five bulls in the center ring with Irene Ledgett, 1930 thru 1932. For a short time in 1931, Zack Terrell loaned him to the John G. Robinson Military Elephants act.

Russell Bros.' one small elephant was Bill's charge for five weeks in 1933 before he went back to the Hall farm, then operated by Hall's widow. He stayed until the Hall collection of 30 elephants, circus wagons, railroad cars, animals and other show property was sold to Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell for their Cole Bros. in 1935.

Woodcock and the late Spencer Huntley were joint owners of an elephant they had on Atterbury Bros. in 1935. Soon they moved over to Harley Sadler's Bailey Bros., which paraded daily, and they stayed on when that show was sold and renamed Goldman Bros. for a three-week winter tour. In 1936 Woodcock had the elephant on the Joe B. Webb Circus until it closed, and then he went with Eddie Kuhn's Camel Bros. three-truck as general superintendent and Side Show manager.

#### Beatty, Wallace, Cole

He took time off for a long talk about show history with the late

Bill Woodcock on "Black Diamond" on Monroe Bros. in 1925. George Piercy Collection.

Bill as a young man in front of the Howes Great London ticket wagon in 1921. Burt Wilson Collection.





Charles Bernard before joining Ray Rogers for five years as boss bull man on the Wallace Bros. and Barnett Bros. outfits. The season of '42 found him with Terrell Jacobs' unit on the Conklin Shows and for the next year he was on Clyde Beatty-Wallace Bros.' Circus.

The first of a four-year stretch with Cole Bros. as assistant to Eugene (Arky) Scott was in 1944, and it was on this show that one of Bill's most memorable experiences occurred. In California the loaded elephant car turned over on its side. It was necessary to cut an opening in the steel roof, crawl in to free the feet of the 13 upset bulls and then lead them out.

Bill had the Dolly Jacobs Elephants in 1948 for dates in the U.S., Canada and Hawaii, and the next season he had charge of five baby bulls on Robbins' Bros.' Circus in Canada. He left before that one folded and joined Kelly-Miller late in 1949.

Since that first day on Rhoda Royal, Bill has worked with 123 different elephants, according to his recent calculation, and many of these turned up several times in different herds. Kelly-Miller's addition of two young elephants brings that total to 125. Bill has broken seven green elephants to acts and has rerouted scores of others. A large proportion of the circus elephants now on the road have at one time or another been under his direction. Once he owned Major, the first bull purchased by Mugivan and Bowers.

#### Selects "Greatest" Ops

Basing judgment on history and personal experience, Woodcock believes Jerry Mugivan was the greatest of recent showmen. He also thinks highly of the abilities of Zack Terrell and Danny Odom. For Woodcock's money, James A. Bailey was the all-time circus ace, with Adam Forepaugh second and Ben Wallace third. The Ringlings were great as a team, he states.

Bill is modest about his elephant career, but stakes a proud claim for his circusiana collection. The Woodcock home in Hugo, Oklahoma, is the location of the vast accumulation. There are the original circus documents, rare route books, antique heralds and programs and —



The Colonel in 1952.

of most interest to Bill — an endless store of circus photographs, statistics and historical data. For more than 40 years, he's been on a ceaseless search for more. During each season he uncovers additional rare letters on circus letterheads, and more photographs of old-time parades.

He is a discriminating collector, discarding nothing but seeking only the material of historical importance. Unlike some less experienced collectors, he doesn't horde just anything that says "circus" on it. And he freely circulates data on old shows and prints of his prized photographs among fellow historians. This material has multiplied the amount of recorded show history.

#### Can't Estimate Value

Bill makes no estimate of the size or value of his collection. He can say only that there are "thousands and

The elephant lineup on the Sells-Floto Circus in 1930. Woodcock is identified by the arrow over his head. Pfening Collection.



thousands" of pictures in it. Many of them can not be duplicated.

Selecting a favorite item from the collection is not easy, either. But Bill has decided that the one with which he would part last is a photograph of a Barnum & Bailey tableau den, typical of those built for the "golden age" of the 1890's. It's a clear close-up giving a full and unobstructed view of the den. It is outstanding, he states, because the ornately carved side panels are in position on the wagon. Most existing pictures of old cages were taken primarily to show the animals inside and therefore were made while the side panels were off, he explains. He chooses this one picture in preference to any of the more costly printed rarities.

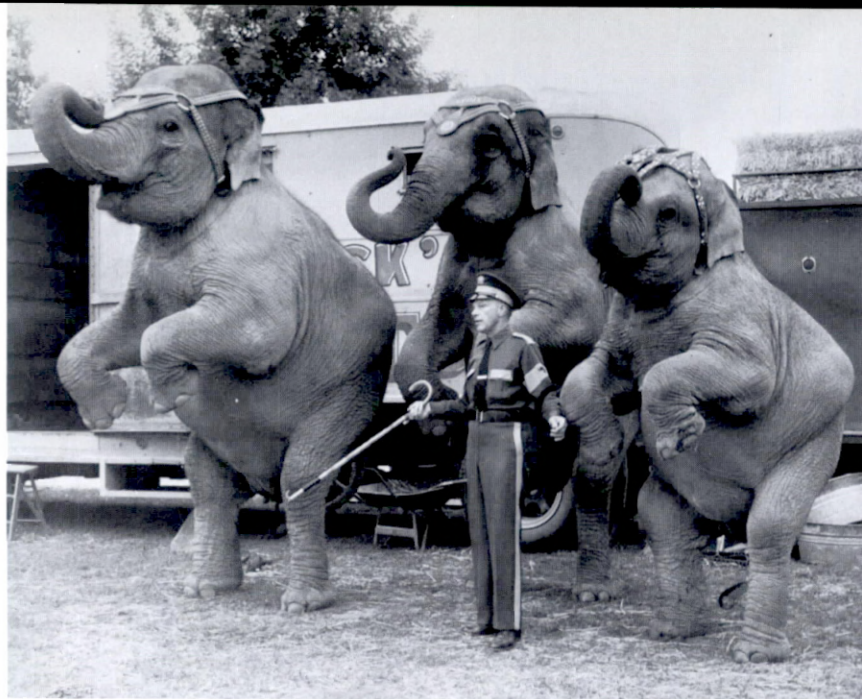
Bill appears in the ring as Col. W. H. Woodcock. His colonel's commission is something more than many of those solemnized on one-sheet lithos because he was billed as a captain and a major before reaching his present rank. In the army of troupers and fans who collect show history most agree that "Colonel Bill" is the ranking officer.

Woodcock finished three years as K-M's superintendent and left that herd in the good hands of Fred Logan. Then he and D. R. Miller formed a partnership to take out Miller & Woodcock's Performing Elephants. Bill broke the act in two portions and he was proud to include the barber-shop routine, an old-timer he had dredged up from lore of elephants long gone. The act was a good one, as Bill insisted it must be.

He took it on nearly a decade of far-ranging dates before turning it over to his son to operate. He and Mrs. Woodcock had the act on Stevens Bros. and Siebrand Bros. shows in 1952. For 1953 it was Cole & Walters, then a string of dates for the Gun Sun Office and finally a Louisiana junket with Tex Carson's Hippodrome.

The Woodcock Elephants made the TV circus shows of the period — Super Circus and Big Top. Bill took them to amusement park dates and then out with the Orrin Davenport Circus. Woodcock and Davenport hit it off well because both could talk about circuses of long ago. And be-





The current Woodcock's Peerless Performing Elephant is shown here with Bill, while on Rudy Bros. in 1958.

cause the act was good, Davenport had it back for 1955 and 1956 stands. All the while, Woodcock was filling in other stands to keep his business going well.

He played more time for various Shrine shows, spent a season with Rudy Bros. on the west coast and earlier had been with Garden Bros. and Bailey Bros. among others. The act kept rolling along through the 1950's. Buckles began helping his father more and by 1960 he was handling many of the dates on his own. Then the Woodcocks were on

the big Kelly-Miller offering in 1960 and 1961. Bill helped with the act and managed the side show. "Just like Barnett Bros.," he used to say, because he had doubled with side show tickets on that show. For 1963 the Woodcock Elephants played fairs and made some dates for the Hubert Castle show, as well as Sells Bros. and others. In the fall he made Shrine dates with the act and then decided he wouldn't troupe next season.

Mrs. Woodcock came home ahead of the act to buy a house in Hugo. When Bill got in, he had been experiencing chest pains. But he couldn't slow down. On December 17 Bill insisted on moving a load of 50 bales of hay. "Just like on Kelly-Miller," he might have said. He was stricken

that night and died on December 20. Bill Jr. mailed the last of his father's voluminous correspondence on December 18. They had been typed on the evening of December 17.

The Colonel prided himself on fine work in his Masonic lodges, and his handling of ritual was so well done that lodges all around asked for him to take part. He began visiting lodges on his elephant tours. Bill was a member of the Kelly-Miller Shrine Club and was most active in the Royal Arch Masons.

He was a chess player of note—about the only one making the dates who could give Orin Davenport any competition in the game. He was a devotee of Gilbert & Sullivan opera. Bill Woodcock was a scholar. But he rarely owned up to it. He played out the role of the rugged trouper who had no patience with the town suckers. He steered away from bookings on a couple of shows because the operators seemed to him a little too nice. Bill said he was more comfortable around showmen like Ray Rogers and Jerry Mugivan and Zack Terrell. And he preferred the little shows, even the ragbags, to the big outfits or indoor circuses.

On July 4, 1963, Bill caught the Milwaukee circus parade preparations but couldn't stay for the main event; he had a date to play on the outskirts of town. On the same trip, Colonel Bill got a look at the Circus World Museum. It was fitting that Col. W. H. Woodcock got to see the museum and the array of circus parade wagons it has. Because here as everywhere else in this country, circus history is preserved largely because of his tireless efforts. He'd never slow down.

## More Wagons in Baraboo

The Circus World Museum has just received five additional wagons, originally on the Hagenbeck-Wallace and Ringling-Barnum Circuses.

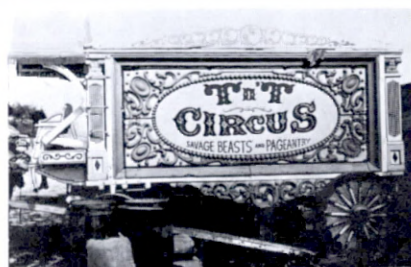
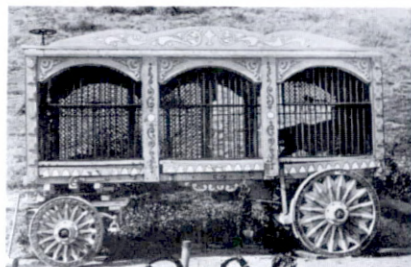
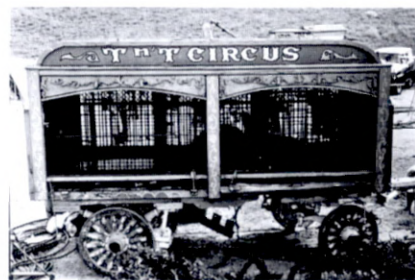
The wagons are a gift from the UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, Hollywood, California. The Schlitz Brewing Company, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, paid the moving expenses and will sponsor the cost of completely restoring them in preparation for the parade on July 4, 1964.

The two cages are especially welcome additions, as they are unlike any now owned by the Baraboo museum. One of the tab wagons is from the same group as the Hagenbeck-Wallace wagon received from

California a year ago.

Chappie Fox, museum director, is requesting help from historians and model builders in building a file on each of the new wagons so they may be repainted just as they were in the

1930's. Fox would like to have information concerning the date they were built and possible shows they may have been with. He is also anxious to have the color combinations used in the 1930 to 1938 period.





# Truth or Fiction Legend or Fact

By PIERRE COUDERC

*"What does it mean for men to know that they possess bodies capable of such perfection of movement, such perfect judgment of interrelated time and space? Were I one such as they, I should know that my body wasn't common clay—a clod—but a beautiful sensate instrument, a confluence of complex cosmic forces, which should leap, bound, swing, sway and swoon at my will, in the play of my emotions."*

Irving K. Pond

The above, written three decades ago, is the philosophic conclusion of an enlightened soul. For those who may not have ever heard of his name or reputation, Irving K. Pond was a famous architect, a reknown intellectual, a patron of the arts, and, generally speaking, quite an unusual individual. What made him unusual is the fact that, among "intellectuals," he was one of the few rare bird of that breed who was capable of recognizing and of appreciating the beauties and difficulties of circus acrobatics—which he hailed as an "art" that far transcends those of acting, singing, and instrumentalization.

With that brief preamble for the reader to keep in mind, we can now proceed with the main theme, which could also have been titled: "THE HISTORY OF THE TRIPLE"—and which, in many ways, is closely related with many of Irving K. Pond's philosophical truths.

Whenever and wherever two or more circophiles get together it is almost a certainty that, eventually, the conversation will drift to comparisons of the miscellaneous feats accomplished by various performers, past and present. Inevitably someone is bound to inject: "D'you ever see 'so-and-so' do the triple?" Naturally that kind of a question seldom fails to trigger a lively discussion, wherein one circophile will invariably contend that "What's-his-name" did the triple much better than "so-and-so"—after which another can't resist remarking that he's seen both but, in his opinion, neither of them could begin to compare with Aloysius Twerp!

That kind of rhubarb is a perennial disease which afflicts most circophiles. No cure has been found for it! Usually it is on the subject of the triple from the fly-bar—and seldom about a triple being executed in any of the other phases of acrobatics. It should also be mentioned that, more often

than not, the contenders are likely to be quoting something they have read rather than an eye-witness report of a performance they've attended personally. The futility of such controversies is that they can rarely be resolved—because, unlike sports, the circus annals do not include a "record book" in which any and all feats that have been publicly achieved have been duly recorded in an authoritative and accurate manner.

True the circophile can seek confirmation of his contentions in the various circus histories, biographies and chronicles which, during the past 50 years or so, have been published and translated in a dozen or more languages. But just how accurate are these?

Historians, in their search for truth, sometimes have to take on trust certain accounts which may be pure legend—and which, once distributed to the public by a famed writer, subsequently become traditional truth to posterity.

Pity the poor circus historian! Without a factual "record book" at his disposal, he is literally left to swim in an ocean of inaccuracies!—and quite often left to drown in it! He can be most diligent in his research; he can delve deeply into circus annals; he may patiently, painstakingly and tediously take

years in his attempts to sift the truth from the legends—but he may still come up with some items which are more fiction than facts!

For example, since way back in 1890, there has been a perennial controversy on the subject of the triple somersault executed by the great leapers from "La Grande Batoide"—the big springboard. That controversy flared up into international prominence in 1930 when somebody took it upon himself to crown a particular performer as "the champion of all leapers." This instantly brought forth a flood of challenging counter-claims from ex and contemporary circus performers, executives, chroniclers and fans—each decrying the claims of all others and naming his own champion!

For almost two years the "BILLBOARD," then a weekly show biz mag devoting a special section to the circus world, was swamped with letters from all over the world—some of the most fantastic claims ever heard regarding the performances of various leapers!

This same old controversy still flares up now and then. But inasmuch as there is no international "record-book," it probably will continue to be a controversy forever!—for who can, with any degree of certainty, sift truth from legend? How can one ascertain who did what?—and when and where?

Circus historians have made a sincere effort to relate the facts and exclude the fiction. But even such efficient and trustworthy authors as C. G. Sturtevant, Henry Thetard,

## GARDNER'S OLD-FASHIONED ONE RING CIRCUS!



Leapers were featured by many of the shows of the 1870's, as shown in this courier of a show operated by Frank A. Gardner. Gardner advertised a "\$1,000 Challenge Leaping Act," in which he himself appeared. Pfening Collection.





Leapers John F. Batcheller and Harry K. Long were featured in this 1881 Barnum and London lithograph. Hertzberg Collection.

Earl Chapin May and many others too numerous to mention, cannot always separate the legends from the facts, simply because in many instances factual documentation is not available. It must also be kept in mind that the admiration bestowed on past times is always the bias of all times. For those who fondly remember the so-called "golden era," there will always be a tendency to exaggerate many things, including eye-witnessing accounts of performers' feats! If two or more witnesses of a recent automobile accident can give conflicting reports, it figures that two or more circophiles giving an account of some ancient circus performance could honestly give conflicting versions!

Thus, for what it may be worth, and without any claim for 100% accuracy, herewith is a brief summary of "THE HISTORY OF THE TRIPLE," listing the performers who did accomplish this feat in the various branches of the art of acrobatics.

Inasmuch as the very first triple was attempted from the big springboard and has been the subject of the oldest and loudest controversy, the first classification shall be:

#### THE BIG SPRINGBOARD (LA GRANDE BATOUE)

"Athletics is the 'prose' of motion. Acrobatics is the highest expression of 'poetry' in motion. In this art, the feeling for rhythm is as vital as in poesy, the sense of time as basic as in music.

Irving K. Pond

The most qualified of our circus historians have written at great lengths about the "golden age" of the great leapers, going back as far as 1842, when Gayton, the very first performer to ever attempt the triple, broke his neck at the Van Amberg Circus, then at Mobile, Alabama.

However, perhaps because time never fails to lend enchantment to past feats and exploits, by 1930 the performances of the "golden age" of the leapers had become such exaggerated legends that C. G. Sturtevant, perhaps to quell the then raging controversy of claims and counter-claims, made a worthy effort to set the record straight. In an issue of *BILLBOARD*,

dated March 26, 1932, this trustworthy historian, after long and tedious research, was the first to present more facts than fiction. Dedicated to truth, Sturtevant went to the extent of listing 109 of the great leapers of the past who had either executed the double and/or leaped over various numbers of elephants, camels, horses and what-have-you—even enumerating the lengths and heights of some of their trajectories. A monumental task!

The peerless historian also listed a much smaller number of those performers who had attempted the triple—and the still smaller number of those who had succeeded and lived to tell the tale. Earl Chapin May also wrote a full chapter on the subject in his "CIRCUS FROM ROME TO RINGLING"—more or less concurring with Sturtevant's accurate reporting. It remained for the equally meticulous Henry Thetard to complete the record by adding a few



This illustration is from a courier of the NEW YORK CIRCUS, operated by L. B. Lent in 1872, listing leaper William Dutton. Pfening Collection.

more names to the list, in his "MERVEILLEUSE HISTORIE DU CIRQUE."

If one is to discard the miscellaneous reports which are more fiction than fact, only nine leapers can be listed as having ever accomplished this hazardous feat. However, from the list of nine, only one single performer is entitled to be listed in the "record book" with the authenticity of documentation, for he is the one



This lithograph featured leapers on the Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus in 1899. McClintock Collection.

and only leaper to accomplish the stupendous feat publicly, not once, but three times! His name: **JOHN (COMISH) WORLAND!**

Before attempting the triple, John Worland was already considered by many to be the greatest leaper. He had on countless occasions executed a double over 10 elephants, heads to heads, three of which were placed on 5 foot pedestals. That in itself was a tremendous feat, for the overall trajectory encompassed a length of 32 feet and the apex of its height reached an approximate 16 feet!

In 1874, when only 19 years old, John Worland attempted his first triple in St. Louis, Missouri—the first two attempts landing in a sitting position, but the third one landing squarely on his feet! It was as much as 7 years later, in 1881, that he again duplicated this hazardous feat, not once but twice, while performing with the Adam Forepaugh Circus. On June 30, 1881, at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, he flawlessly executed the triple from the big springboard, and on July 7, of the same year, he repeated the accomplishment at La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Those who had seen the spectacular performance were indeed confirmed. But those who had not remained unbelievers. Impossible!—said fans and professionals alike. Who could blame them for their skepticism? The "pros" and "cons" stirred such a controversy that the hapless Worland (probably against his own better judgment) finally consented to once more demonstrate that his deed had been a fact instead of fiction. In 1887, when the Adam Forepaugh Circus was in New Haven, Connecticut, Worland agreed that he would try it once more. Included in the audience that day were the Mayor of the town, a committee of town folk whose probity was unquestionable, plus a large number of hard-bitten news reporters.

The event, which naturally had been given the widest of publicity, had attracted a packed audience. At the given moment, John Worland, resplendent in spangled tights, took his breathless run down the big springboard, and with a mighty leap soared into the air, tucked himself



into a ball, spinning forward into his triple somersault—and landed squarely on his feet on the tick amidst the greatest ovation ever accorded a circus performer!

### THIS IS FOR THE RECORD. IT IS DOCUMENTED!

The great John (Comish) Worland, born in 1855, died in 1933 at the ripe old age of 87, not in the glory of his past achievement, but as a plebian coal dealer in the town of Corning, New York. A rather inglorious finish for a glorious circus performer!

Of the other eight performers who have been reported by various chroniclers as having accomplished the hazardous feat, the only one that can be recorded with any degree of certainty is that of Ab Johnson in 1898, at the La Pearle Circus in Mobile, Alabama. The Ab Johnson performance has been duly documented. However, inasmuch as Johnson landed squarely on his posterior rather than on his feet, it cannot be counted as an accomplishment.

There are also the accounts of William Dutton and Robert Stickney. But there is no factual documentation of either account. Rumor has it that, in 1860, Billy Dutton successfully executed the triple in Elkhorn, Illinois, while with the Robinson & Lake Circus—as a result of a wager made with the clown Lowlow. The report is that Dutton did it. But, realizing only too well that only a miracle had saved him from losing control of his body after the second turn, he would never try it again. On the other hand, there are also various other accounts which state that Billy tried it—and failed. Inasmuch as there is no documentation to back up either report, there is no certainty as to whether Billy Dutton should be included or excluded from the list.

Regarding Bob Stickney, and with due respect for his record as a great leaper during that "golden era," there is considerable doubt whether or not he should be included in the list. Some reports claim that in 1860, when only 14 years old, Stickney successfully executed the triple at the New York Hippodrome—a hardly credible report, considering his age. Other accounts report that he did it a number of times landing in a blanket, but never on his feet. Inasmuch as there is no documentation on the conflicting reports, either of which could be fact or fiction, Dutton's supposed feat cannot be considered valid and must be discarded.

Six other leapers are credited with performing the dangerous triple from the big springboard:

An Englishman named Tomkinson supposedly executed it in 1885 during a performance at the Bastien Franconi Circus in Edinburgh, Scotland. But no documentation can be found to sustain the claim.

Auriol, the French leaper, is reported having done it in Paris in 1887, while during the same year, James Madigan also supposedly did it in England, and Dan Castello in



*Ed. Lullin. Wm. Dutton. Charles Fox 1877.*

William Dutton is shown in a rare photograph taken in 1877. Burt Wilson Collection.

the United States. But again these reports are without any authenticity of documentation.

In 1871 the clown leaper, Sam Rhinehart attempted it at the Cooper & Bailey circus—but landed on his seat, injuring himself badly. And in 1889 Edmund Montrose, of the famous Austrian troupe by the same name, then performing at the Cirque D'Ete in Paris, overturned his triple, also injuring himself as he landed on his arms.

In addition to the above, there is an unconfirmed report that one certain George Miller, at the Older & Badger Circus in 1860 managed to execute the triple twice in practice—breaking his neck on the third attempt. The only accurate documentation is that of his death.

Before and since George Miller, seven other famous leapers can be



listed in the "Martyreology" of the circus. The first one to lose his life in the attempt was the clown, Gayton, who broke his neck in 1842.

Three years later, Bill Hobbs suffered the same fate in 1845 at the Westminster Astley Amphitheatre in England.

Then in 1859, Johnny Aymar, famous American leaper, also succumbed to sudden death in the Isle of Wight when he turned twice and a half.

In 1870 Frank Stark, stimulated by the reports of Billy Dutton having accomplished the feat in Elkhorn, made a foolish wager of \$100 that he could duplicate it. He didn't live to pay off the bet—for he, too, broke his neck in Indianapolis, Indiana, while attempting it.

Sturtevant reports that another leaper named Gus Werner also lost his life attempting the triple. Considering the accuracy of that always reliable historian, the name of Gus Werner must be included in the list, even though nowhere can be found any mention of the date, place, or circumstances under which this took place.

From the time that Ab Johnson made that last abortive attempt to execute the triple in 1898, a period of 35 years elapsed without any leaper trying to achieve fame and/or death by performing the triple from the big springboard. It can be presumed that this long quiescence was the result of two factors: (1) the almost general discard of the big springboard as a traditional presentation by most of the circuses between 1915 and 1930; (2) a sober appraisal by the later generations of circus performers of the odds against success and in favor of sudden death.

Whether those later generations had grown-up to be less audacious and more sensible is a moot question. One must presume that many must have tried the triple, with the help of the "mechanic"—that safety device used when practicing dangerous new acrobatic tricks or routines. How many leapers practiced it with the "mechanic" during that long period of three and a half decades is unknown. The fact remains that from 1898 on no performer made a public attempt to do the triple from the big springboard—until 1933.

Perhaps the raging controversy that had flared up on the subject during 1930 and 1931 served as a stimulus to some of the circus owners, who began to revive the old traditional springboard. At any rate, by 1933, quite a number of circuses, including Ringling Bros., were once more presenting leapers from the big springboard on their programs.

That year, when the Ringling Show was encamped for a week's stand in Boston, Mass., among the many leapers performing from the big springboard was an audacious little Belgian named Gene Dekoe. For years Gene had been the comedy-tumbler with the famous Joe Dekoe Troupe. Subsequently he and Gabriel Dekoe, the ex-topmounter from the same troupe had teamed to form their own acrobatic comedy act. Not much more than 5 foot 3½ inches of height, Gene was a rather intrepid little fellow who had about done anything and everything in the line of leaps—except the triple.

Perhaps spurred by the various accounts which had been widely published during the previous two years regarding the "golden era" of the famous preceding leapers, the little Belgian had resolutely made up his mind that the time had come for him to accomplish the triple!

Though he had never tried it before—not even with the aid of the "mechanic"—Gene Dekoe was so confident of his ability to accomplish the hazardous feat that, on that par-







# READERS COMMENTS .....

Here begins a new column which will appear periodically and will feature comments and photos that have been received from the membership in response to articles that appear in Bandwagon. It will consist of additional historical information, correction of errors, and other interesting observations. The layout will be such that the reader will be able to easily refer back to the original article and all items will be grouped together according to a particular subject for easy future reference.

## Five Graces Bandwagon

(Sept.-Oct., 1963, Issue  
Circus Wagon History File)

Leonard Farley of San Antonio Hertzberg Circus Collection says he checked the Barnum & Bailey 1906 route book and that it confirms that no street parade was given that season. However, during the Madison Square Garden date on Friday, April 20, fifty wagons were sent on the streets of New York City to collect funds for the victims of the San Francisco earthquake disaster. The route book did not say whether a parade formation was used for this solicitation or not. When the show moved to the Brooklyn engagement the solicitation was continued for this cause but consisted of vending of bags of peanuts by the lady performers of the show and was most successful.

Ralph Hartman, also of San Antonio, writes that he has one of the ornate carved seats from the Five Graces wagon. It was removed when



Robbins Bros. Circus loaded flats, Parsons, Kansas, July 24, 1927. First cage showing corner statue is old Barnum and Bailey hippo den. Charles Kitto Collection.

the wagon was revamped to appear in the RBBB spec in 1945. Dr. Hartman says another interesting item in his collection is one of the large winged cat animals from the old Ringling No. 38 cage wagon (see photo on page 133 of C. P. Fox's "Circus Parades") and has been nicely restored and mounted over his fireplace. It is the carving from the front right hand corner of the wagon.

## Gladiator and Lion Wagon

(Sept.-Oct., 1963, Issue, Circus  
Wagon History File)

New member, Jack McCracken, of McArthur, Calif., former long string driver with many shows, confirms that 1916 was the first year of the Gladiator & Lion wagon. He says it was built by Sullivan and Eagle and shipped to the Montgomery, Ala., quarters in time to open with the John Robinson Circus in 1916. Jack says that he was the first to drive the wagon and that in 1916 it hauled the clown band. During the winter of 1915-16 he says both Mugivan and Bowers shows, John Robinson, and Howes Great London were in quarters at the fairgrounds in Montgomery. John Robinson opened at Brewton, Ala., in March, 1916, and went immediately to the West Coast and was out there before Al G. Barnes started out.

The late Bill Woodcock in one of the last letters written to the author of the above mentioned article remarked that he saw the Gladiator & Lion wagon in 1917 and 1918 on the John Robinson Circus and that it was painted orange with gold leaf, and said that he noted an oddity in the 1917 parade in that the wagon was not equipped with sunburst wheels as were the other 30 to 35 vehicles in the march.

## Baldwin Park Quarters

(July-Aug., 1936, Issue)

Charles Johnson, of Monterey Park, Calif., who was on the Al G. Barnes show 1928 thru 1938 writes that the Pacific Electric RR had a small shelter by their tracks in front of the Baldwin Park quarters with the name "Al G. Barnes" on it and it was a regular stop when the show was in winter quarters.

## Granger Quarters

(Sept.-Oct., 1963, Issue)

Warren H. Wood of Hillsdale, N.J.,

informs that he visited the old Buchanan quarters at Granger in the spring of 1933. Earl Sinwott, who operated a pawn shop in Des Moines and claimed to have been a wagon builder for Buchanan, drove him out to the quarters. Wood said that Sinwott offered to sell him both the Two Hemispheres and the China tableau for \$350.00. Wood observed that the Hemispheres wagon was in a state of pretty bad dry rot at the time and the wheels had been removed. (This was evidently only a short time before the late Jake Wagner got and moved the wagon to the Des Moines fairgrounds).

The most interesting bit of information Wood related was that Sinwott mentioned to him that a Chinese restaurant had wanted to purchase the carvings only off the China wagon for decorating purposes but that he would not sell the wagon for any purpose other than for what it was originally intended. Wood speculates if perhaps the carvings off the China wagon were indeed finally sold to decorate some Chinese restaurant. Of course this is a possibility, however there is pretty good evidence that the wagon remained around Granger for many years thereafter and was last reported to be in a very deplorable state but still intact. Its exact fate is still a mystery.

Wood says he regrets that he didn't have a camera with him that day and admits that he was so absorbed in seeing the old Two Hemispheres wagon there that his memory is clouded on any other wagons or railway equipment that may have been there. In fact he says he can't remember seeing the China wagon clearly that day but does remember what Sinwott said about the prospective buyer of its carvings.

As yet no one has turned up a photo showing the railway equipment parked at the Granger quarters but Charles Kitto of Beloit, Wis., generously loaned us the fine 1927 Robbins Bros. loaded flats view printed here. It was taken by the late Arthur Toews.

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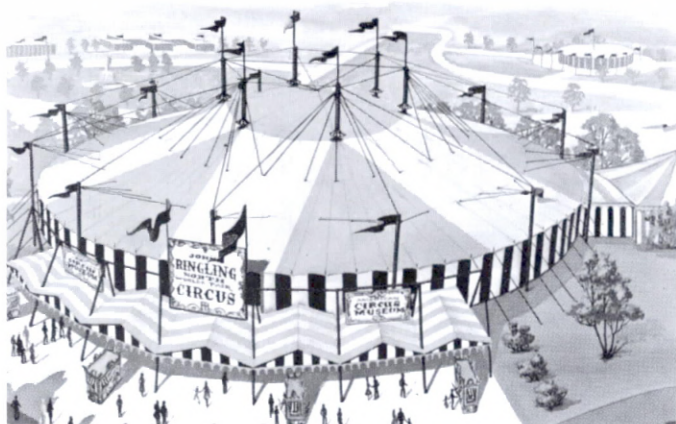
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**Circus Historical Society**

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## RINGLING CIRCUS MUSEUM TO DISPLAY AT WORLD'S FAIR

Continental Circus officials recently announced plans for a nostalgia-laden adjunct to the World's Fair Continental Circus now being readied for the opening next April.

Circus lovers will literally walk through the pages of Circus history — from Rome to Ringling — in a colorful museum that will serve as the entrance to the World's Fair Continental Circus.

Housed in a gay, candy-striped pavilion, this historical exhibition will be presented by the Ringling Circus Museum in Sarasota, Florida.

Mel Miller, Ringling Circus Museum curator, in unveiling a model of the exhibition, emphasized that the historical show will be staged with all the flavor of the Circus amid a kaleidoscopic setting of spangled costumes, colored tanbark, dazzling sunburst wheels and calliope music. The goal of the Ringling Circus Museum is to present an entertaining yet fundamentally educational prelude to the World's Fair Continental Circus.

A wealth of Circus antiquities from the Florida State-owned institution will also be included in the Museum. Rare documents, prints, posters and priceless old Circus parade wagons — resplendent in gilt carvings — will help illustrate the birth of the Circus and its growth and development through the years.

The museum exhibition will tell of the introduction of the Circus to early America and its rapid growth in the 19th century. Here a miniature diorama of an old-time Circus parade, will bring back childhood memories to a good many now grown-up boys and girls.

Three antique parade wagons form a silent but dazzling procession in the center of the historical pavilion. These glittering survivors of the horse-drawn era recall the days when elaborate parades rumbled through the streets of America to herald the arrival of the Circus. The Gladiator & Lion Bandwagon and the Lion & Snake Bandwagon, the marvelous old

Ringling Bros. carillon chimes wagon will be displayed.

A realistic reproduction of a Circus "backyard" setting, with life-size figures, will provide a glimpse into the private world of the Circus. Cos-

tumed performers will be shown awaiting their entrance cues, amid the outlandish myriad of props and rigging used in Circus staging.

The goliath world of Barnum and Bailey will be recalled through the exhibition of flamboyant posters, documents and fascinating photographs from the turn of the century era.

Further on, the incredible rise of the fabulous Ringling Brothers unfolds in rare handbills, lithographs, posters and photographs, leading to their eventual acclaim as "Circus Kings" of all time.

The exhibition then projects the viewer into the twentieth century to the streamlined Circus of today. As the last chapter brings this nostalgic adventure to a close, it also sets the mood for the exciting climax that follows, for now the unmistakable sounds of the Circus band tingle the visitor's ears. As it weaves its magic spell, it beckons him out of the past and into the giant arena where the living Circus awaits him — The World's Fair Continental Circus.

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